

Pearls of Devotion

PEARLS OF DEVOTION

The Sermons of Swami B. D. Mādhava

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Foreword

his material world is like a fire in which we burn day and night. Saints save us from this fire. This statement is Absolute. Nowadays we see some people enjoy material luxuries like air- conditioned environments and air-conditioned automobiles, whilst there are others who do hard labour like breaking stones on the roadside during a hot sunny day. On analysis one finds that everyone's heart is burning with desires to achieve something. Lord Kṛṣṇa, the Supreme Creator of everything, recites in Śrīmad Bhagavad-Gita: "I created this world which is full of miseries".

This world is presently full of miseries and it was also full of miseries even during Satya yuga, Dvapara yuga and Treta yuga. There is only one method that can save us from such miseries. We need to associate with pure devotees of Lord Kṛṣṇa, chant the Holy Name in their association and hear the pastimes of the Supreme Lord from them. They provide us with the long-desired cure from these worldly miseries.

This book is a collection of sermons of a pure devotee - Most revered Śrī Śrīmad Bhakti Dayita Madhav Goswami Maharaj, an eternal associate of Śrī Śrī Radha Kṛṣṇa and founder-acharya of Sree Chaitanya Gaudiya Math. These sermons are the cure for our material misery. Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswati Prabhupada used to say that someone is most merciful if he can transform a living soul into a devotee. If you are able to make somebody a devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa, this deed is a million times more beneficial than building numerous hospitals. Our life span is short. Our life is worthy only if we die whilst chanting the Lord's Holy Name.

The manner in which Śrīla Bhakti Dayita Madhav Goswami Maharaj served His Spiritual Master, Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Saraswati Prabhupada, was unique. We cannot even think of following that. He laid an example by strictly adhering to the instructions of His Spiritual Master. When everybody got tired of doing something, Śrīla Madhav Maharaj would then say "Let us begin". He surrendered himself completely unto the lotus feet of Śrīla Prabhupada and that is why Prabhupada empowered him with all divinity.

After taking sannyasa (renounced order), he started preaching with more vigour. He was a divine personality, living and leading a high standard of spiritual life. Everybody was attracted by his clear and astoundingly factual revelations about the devotional service of Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. He was respected by all classes of society for his method of preaching. He visited various religious institutions and gave thought provoking lectures. His divine personality attracted many people to him and now there are many people throughout India who, after taking initiation from him, are chanting the Lord's Holy Name.

Following his footsteps, his most beloved disciple, Śrīla Bhakti Ballabh Tirtha Goswami Maharaja, the President-Acharya of Sree Chaitanya Gaudiya Math, the founder-president of Gokul (Global Organisation of Kṛṣṇachaitanya's Universal Love) and the president of World Vaishnava Association, has been engaged in the propagation of the all-embracing doctrine of transcendental Divine Love of Śrī Chaitanya Mahaprabhu in India as well as in various countries of the world.

We convey our sincere thanks and gratitude to all those who have helped and motivated us in making this project a reality.

The editors humbly beg readers' forgiveness for any errors or omissions that may have inadvertently crept into this publication.

-GOKUL

Global Organisation of Kṛṣṇachaitanya's Universal Love

Maṅgalācaraṇa

(Auspicious Invocation)

Śrīla Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Gosvāmi Mahārāja would recite the following verses before beginning his discourses:

*nāma-śreṣṭham manum api śacī-putram atra svarūpaṁ
rūpaṁ tasyāgrajam uru-purīm māthurīm goṣṭhavāṭīm
rādhā-kunḍaṁ giri-varam aho rādhikā-mādhavāśāṁ
prāpto yasya prathita-kṛpayā śrī-gurum taṁ nato 'smi*

I offer my respectful obeisances unto the lotus feet of my spiritual master because he has given me the most exalted Holy Name and, due to his causeless mercy, I hope to serve the son of Mother Śacī—Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, Śrī Svarūpa Dāmodara Gosvāmī, Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī, Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī, Mathurā- maṇḍala, the village of Vraja, Rādhā-kunḍa, Girirāja Govardhana, and, aho! Śrīmatī Rādhikā and Mādhava Themselves.

*śrī-caitanya-mano-'bhīṣṭam
sthāpitaṁ yena bhū-tale
svayaṁ rūpaḥ kadā mahyaṁ
dadāti sva-padāntikam*

When will Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī Prabhupāda, who has established within this material world the mission to fulfil the desire of Lord Caitanya, give me shelter under his lotus feet?

*vāñchā-kalpa-tarubhyaś ca
kṛpā-sindhubhya eva ca
patitānāṁ pāvanebhyo*

vaiṣṇavebhyo namo namaḥ

I repeatedly offer my obeisances to the Vaiṣṇavas who fulfil all desires like wish-fulfilling trees, who are oceans of compassion and who are redeemers of the fallen souls.

saṅkarṣaṇaḥ kāraṇa-toya-śāyī

garbhoda-śāyī ca payobdhi-śāyī

śeṣaś ca yasyāmśa-kalāḥ sa nityā-

nandākhya-rāmaḥ śaraṇaṁ mamāstu

I take absolute shelter of Śrīman Nityānanda Prabhu, Who is Balarāma Himself and Whose Partial Manifestations and Parts of the Partial Manifestations are Saṅkarṣaṇa, the Viṣṇus Who lie on the Kāraṇa Ocean (Kāraṇābdhiśāyī), Garbha Ocean (Garbhodaśāyī) and Milk Ocean (Kṣīrodaśāyī), as well as Śeṣa.

anarpita-carīm cirāt karuṇayāvatīrṇaḥ kalau

samarpayitum unnatojjvala-rasām sva-bhakti-śrīyam

hariḥ puraṭa-sundara-dyuti-kadamba-sandīpitaḥ

sadā hṛdaya-kandare sphuratu vaḥ śacī-nandana

May the Supreme Lord Who is known as the son of Śrīmatī Śacīdevī be transcendently situated in the innermost chambers of your heart. Resplendent with the radiance of molten gold, He has appeared in the Age of Kali by His causeless mercy to bestow what no avatāra has ever offered before: the most

sublime and radiant mellow of devotional service—the mellow of conjugal love.

pañca-tattvātmakam kṛṣṇam

bhakta-rūpa-svarūpakam

bhaktāvatāram bhaktākhyam

namāmi bhakta-śaktikam

I offer my obeisances unto the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Who is non-different from His features as a devotee, devotional descent, devotional manifestation, pure devotee and devotional energy.

jayatām suratau paṅgor

mama manda-mater gatī

mat-sarvasva-padāmbhojau

rādhā-madana-mohanau

Glory to the all-merciful Rādhā and Madana-mohana! I am lame and ill advised, yet They are my owners, and Their Lotus Feet are everything to me.

dīvyad-vṛndāranya-kalpa-drumādhaḥ-

śrīmad-ratnāgāra-simhāsana-sthau

śrīmad-rādhā-śrīla-govinda-devau

preṣṭhālībhiḥ sevyamānau smarāmi

In a temple of ornaments and jewels situated beneath a desire tree in Goloka Vṛndāvana, Śrī Śrī Radha-Govinda, served by Their most confidential and dear associates, sit upon an effulgent throne. I offer my humble obeisances unto Them.

śrīmān rāsa-rasārambhī

vaṁśī-vaṭa-taṭa-sthitaḥ

karṣan veṇu-svanair gopīr

gopīnāthaḥ śriye 'stu naḥ

Śrī Gopinatha, Who originated the transcendental mellow of the rāsa dance, stands on the shore of Vaṁśīvaṭa, attracting the attention of the cowherd damsels with the sound of His transcendental flute. May They all confer upon us Their benediction.

ādhāro 'py aparādhānām

aviveka-hato 'py aham

tvat-kāruṇya-pratīkṣo 'smi

prasīda mayi mādharma

Although I am a mine of offences, and although I cannot tell right from wrong, I still hope for Your mercy. O Lord Mādhava, please be merciful to me.

vande nanda-vraja-strīṇām

pāda-reṇum abhīkṣṇaśaḥ

yāsām hari-kathodgītām

punāti bhuvana-trayam

I repeatedly offer my respectful obeisances to the dust from the lotus feet of the cowherd damsels of Nanda Mahārāja's village of Vraja. I place that dust upon my forehead. When these damsels loudly chant the glories of the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the vibration purifies the three worlds (heaven, earth and the underworld)—the entire universe.

vāg-īśā yasya vadane

lakṣmīr yasya ca vakṣasi

yasyāste hṛdaye samvit

taṁ nṛsiṁham ahaṁ bhaje

Goddess Sarasvatī is always present in His mouth, Lakṣmīdevī always sports on His chest, and His heart is the abode of grand refulgence of the opulence of Absolute Knowledge. I worship that Lord Nṛsiṁhadeva.

bhaktyā vihīna aparādha-lakṣaiḥ

kṣiptāśca kāmādi-taraṅga-madhye

kṛpāmayi tvām śaranam prapannā

vṛnde namaste caraṇāravindam

I am devoid of devotion, replete with millions of offences and distracted by waves of evil desires. O compassionate Vṛndādevī, I take shelter of You and pay my innumerable prostrated obeisance's at Your lotus feet. Kindly rescue me.

nārāyaṇam namaskṛtya

naram caiva narottamam

devīm sarasvatīm vyāsam

tato jayam udīrayet

Before commencing this recitation, which is the very means of conquest, one should offer respectful obeisances unto the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, unto His eternal friend (the suppeermost human being), unto mother Sarasvatī (the goddess of learning), and unto Śrīla Vyāsadeva (who compiled the Lord's pastimes).

God, the living entity, and their interrelationship

Reasoning about the Supreme Lord

We know that the ultimate goal of life is to achieve the Absolute Truth, the Supreme Lord. The question is, how can we achieve this goal, and what is the correct method for doing so? We shall discuss this here.

First of all, let us consider the karma-mārga (path of fruitive activity). What is karma? Can any activity that we perform be termed as karma? The answer is no, because that activity could be akarma (non-performance of prescribed duties) or vikarma (prohibited activity). Activity performed according to the directions of the scriptures is known as karma. There can be no karma without the ego of the performer of karma. This ego is classified as being of three types—sāttvika, rājasika and tāmasika, or characterised by goodness, passion and ignorance. It is important to note that these three modes are qualities of māyā, the Lord's illusory external potency. In other words, these modes are three forms of ignorance. Now please consider, can ignorance or absence of knowledge ever be a method of attaining the Supreme Lord, Who is the Form of Complete Knowledge? Never. Thus, the Supreme Lord cannot be achieved by karma.

Then can the Supreme Lord be achieved by acquiring knowledge?

No. One cannot achieve the Supreme Lord by knowledge of nirbheda-brahmānusandhāna (inquiry into non-differentiated Brahman) or nirākāra-nirviśeṣa-brahma (impersonal, formless Brahman) because these do not accept the Form of the Supreme Lord. This knowledge can, however, help one put an end to the ignorance of material existence, and cross over the threefold qualities of māyā. Through the process of neti-neti ("not this, not that"), jñānīs are able to leave aside the asat, or non-eternal, but the tendency for sad-vastu, the Supreme Lord, does not arise in them. For example, if I take a loan from somebody, I will be worried because I will have to pay back the loan. After I repay my debt, I am no longer a debtor, but I am not a rich man either. There is a possibility that after paying back my debt, I could become penniless. Similarly, consider a person who has an affection or attachment for the sāttvika, rājasika and tāmasika objects of this world. Through some method, he is able to sever his attachment for these worldly objects, but he is still unable to develop the desire to achieve the ultimate goal—bhagavad-vastu or vaikunṭha-vastu. Such a person will never be able to enter Vaikunṭha, the transcendental abode, or to achieve vaikunṭha-vastu, the Supreme Lord. Therefore, the Supreme Lord cannot be achieved by knowledge of nirbheda- brahmānusandhāna or nirākāra-nirviśeṣa-brahma.

Can the Supreme Lord be attained by aṣṭāṅga-yoga? The answer is no, because

in this process, one endeavours to merge the ātmā in the Paramātmā:

yogaś citta-vṛtti-nirodhaḥ (Patañjali's Yoga-sūtra 1.2)

The practice of controlling one's mind and directing it away from material objects is known as yoga. One meditates upon the Supreme Lord, but not for the Supreme Lord. Yogīs simply try to merge the ātmā in the Paramātmā. In other words, they do not meditate for the pleasure of the Paramātmā (the Supreme Lord). Their only motive is to save themselves from all the miseries that arise due to the mind being entrapped in worldly existence. According to the devotional scriptures, this is also not the correct method. How, then, will we be able to achieve the Supreme Lord? How will we be able to enter His transcendental abode of Vaikuṇṭha?

In the Kaṭha Upaniṣad, it is said:

nāyam ātmā pravacanena labhyo

na medhayā na bahunā śrutena

yam evaiṣa vṛṇute tena labhyas

tasyaiṣa ātmā vivṛṇute tanūṁ svām

(Kaṭha Upaniṣad 1.2.23)

One cannot understand the ātmā or the Paramātmā by lectures (pravacanena) or by argumentation. Even if one is very intelligent and his intellect is admired by big, world-famous barristers, still, he cannot know the Absolute Truth with his sharp intellect. In this connection, the above verse says, *na medhayā labhya*: “The Absolute Truth cannot be known with one's intellect or brainpower.” Alright, let us suppose someone has studied and memorised the Vedas,

Upaniṣads, Rāmāyaṇa, all the tantra- śāstras, Mahābhārata, and other eternal scriptures. Aside from that, he has also memorised the Bible, Quran, Guru Grantha Sāhib, etcetera, as well as all the scriptures of the Buddhists, Jains, and all other religions of the world. Can such a person know the Absolute Truth? The above verse says, na bahunā śrutena labhya: “One cannot know the Absolute Truth even by memorising all the scriptures.” How, then, can we know Him?

In response, the scriptures state that the foremost method of attaining the Supreme Lord and of entering into the kingdom of God is śaraṇāgati— unconditional surrender. Therefore, we should try to surrender unconditionally unto the Supreme Lord. There is no other method apart from this. The above verse says, yam evaiṣa vṛṇute tena labhya: “Only one who is graced by the Supreme Lord can know Him.” Another meaning of this is that only one who surrenders unconditionally unto the Lord can know and attain the Supreme Lord. If you refer to the Third Canto of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, you will find that Hiranyaśipu, the father of Prahlāda Mahārāja, performed severe austerities which are not even possible for other ṛṣis and munis to undertake. He was so intelligent that when Lord Brahmā refused to grant him a boon of immortality, he asked for a boon that he not die on the earth or in the sky, during the day or in the night, by weapons, Vedic hymns, mantras, or by any of the living beings within the creation, such as human beings, animals, demigods, etc. With this boon, he became so full of pride that one day, he challenged Prahlāda Mahārāja, a great devotee of Lord Viṣṇu, as follows: “Where is your Viṣṇu? With my club in hand, I searched for Him all over the three worlds but did not find Him anywhere!”

In other words, even with such severe penance, great intelligence, strength and mystic power, Hiranyaśipu was not able to see Lord Viṣṇu, the Absolute Truth, by his own ability. Similarly, there are many yogīs and siddha-puruṣas (perfected sages) in this world who can perform some material feats, but they cannot have darśana of the Supreme Lord by their own strength or ability.

The jīva and its duty

There are many religious groups in northern India which believe that the living

entity is God. But on further evaluation, this does not hold true. [Holding up a paperweight]: This is a paperweight made of glass. If anyone claims that it is a gem or gold, it will not become these things just by his saying so, because this object is completely different from what he is saying it is. Similarly, to say that the living entity is God is also not correct. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu has said that the living entity (jīva) is a part of the marginal potency of Lord Kṛṣṇa. This marginal potency (taṭasthā-śakti) exists between the internal potency (antaraṅgā-śakti) and external potency (bahiraṅgā- or māyā-śakti). The jīva is neither a part of the external potency nor of the internal potency. The scriptural evidence for this can be found in the Nārada Pañcarātra:

yat taṭasthaṁ tu cid-rūpaṁ

sva-saṁvedyād vinirgatam

rañjitaṁ guṇa-rāgeṇa

sa jīva iti kathyate

The marginal potency consists of particles of consciousness that have emanated from the cit-śakti of the Omniscient Supreme Lord. Being agitated by the three modes of material nature, these spiritual beings are known as jīvas.

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī explains the taṭasthā-śakti as follows:

taṭasthatvaṁ ca māyā-śakty-atītatvāt. asyāvidyā-para-bhāvādi- rūpeṇa doṣeṇa paramātmāno lepābhāvāc cobhaya-koṭāv apraveśāt.

tasya tac-chaktitve saty api paramātmanas tal-lepābhāvaś ca yathā kvacid eka-deśa-sthe raśmau chāyayā tiraskṛte 'pi sūryasyātiraskāras tadvat.

(Paramātmā Sandarbha, Anuccheda 37, texts 12 & 13)

The marginal potency known as jīva-śakti is different from the external potency; it is not a part of the external potency. On the other hand, due to being enveloped by ignorance, the jīva is also different from Paramātmā, the Supreme Lord, who is always transcendental and uncontaminated. Although ignorance (avidyā) is one of the potencies of the Supreme Lord, even a trace of ignorance cannot affect the Lord, in the same way that a ray of the sun can become covered by clouds, but the sun always remains uncovered. The constitutional position (svarūpa) of the jīva is that it is an eternal servant of Lord Kṛṣṇa. It has appeared from the marginal potency of the Supreme Lord and is a manifestation that is simultaneously different and non-different from Him. Just as there are atomic particles in the rays of the sun and sparks of the fire, similarly, innumerable jīvas emanate from the marginal potency of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Therefore, the jīva can never become God. In the past, he was also a servant of the Supreme Lord, but at present, being entrapped by māyā (the external potency), he has forgotten his servitorship of God. Nevertheless, the jīva is, by nature, an eternal servant of the Supreme Lord. When the jīva realises his actual position and becomes freed from the clutches of māyā, he will still remain a servant of the Supreme Lord.

Many people question the necessity of performing hari-bhajana throughout one's life: "Let us spend our youth in enjoying material pleasures or fulfilling our wordly obligations. We will chant the Lord's Holy Name during our old age or at the time of death. By doing only this much, we will be able to rescue ourselves from the 84 lakhs of species and become eligible to go to Vaikuṇṭha."

If you think that you will perform hari-bhajana in your old age, then this will be impossible to do. At that time, you will not be able to serve the Lord as there won't be any energy left in your body. Your hands and legs will tremble, and your eyesight and power of hearing will be diminished. The biggest hurdle will be the deeds performed by you throughout your life which will fill your consciousness. At the time of death, you will keep recalling these deeds out of habit and then you will be forced to dwell on material subject matters.

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam says that the mind (citta) is the cause of bondage and also of liberation. It is within this mind that we will have to establish Śrī Kṛṣṇa. How is this possible, one might ask? The reply to this is, all our lives, we have heard, spoken about and thought of material subject matters. That is why our minds are filled with material subjects. Therefore, we should now listen to the sermons

given by pure devotees of the Lord, and recite whatever we have heard to others. In this way, if we keep on recalling those sermons, Śrī Bhagavān will become established in our hearts. The reason for this is, the very things that we keep hearing and speaking about become established in our minds. For example, if we keep on hearing about a cat, dog or any other person, within a short time, that very cat, dog or person will become established in our mind. In the same way, if one wants to establish the Lord within his heart, if one wants to attain the Lord, he will have to hear about Kṛṣṇa, talk about Kṛṣṇa and think about Kṛṣṇa. In this way, his heart will go to Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, the three devotional forms of hearing, chanting and remembering about the Name, Form, Qualities and Pastimes of the Supreme Lord and His associates are the best means of attaining the Supreme Lord. There are thousands of devotional forms mentioned in the scriptures but these three [hearing, chanting and remembering] are the foremost. That is why we have special arrangements to follow these three devotional forms in our maṭhas (temples).

This human life is the most precious form of life in which we have the best opportunity of performing devotional service to the Supreme Lord. Only the human being has the ability to differentiate between good (sat) and bad (asat) and by worshipping sad-vastu, the Supreme Lord, he can achieve everything, even up to achieving the highest good, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself.

The Kaṭha Upaniṣad says:

nityo nityānāṁ cetanaś cetanānāṁ eko bahūnāṁ yo vidadhāti kāmān

tam ātma-sthaṁ ye 'nupaśyanti dhīrās teṣāṁ śāntiḥ śāśvatī netareṣāṁ

(Kaṭha Upaniṣad 2.5.13 & Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad 6.13)

The one who is the greatest Eternal Entity among all eternal entities; by whose absence, the eternity of the eternal does not remain, i.e., that which is the cause of the eternal entities and the Real Knowledge among all mundane knowledge; who is the One among many; who fulfils all kinds of desires—that Supreme Being is always seen or experienced by grave or resolute persons (dhīra). The śruti says that only such dhīra persons can attain eternal peace, not others.

Therefore, as long as the body has strength, the senses are working and the breath is flowing, we should surrender everything unto the Lotus Feet of the Transcendental Eternal Entity, the Supreme Lord, and engage ourselves in His worship. That we will perform bhajana in our old age, or chant the Holy Name only at the time of death and cross over the ocean of material existence is a most futile thought. Learned persons never think in this manner.

How to achieve the Absolute

Nowadays we hear from different people in society that whatever path one is on is the best, and is a valid means of achieving the Supreme Lord. But this is not supported by any scriptures; these are simply casual, hasty statements. These people say, “If a tiny village or city has numerous roads by which one can enter it, then is the Supreme Lord any smaller than a village or city? No, He is all-pervading and is infinitely bigger than any village or city. Therefore, there must be an infinite number of means of achieving the Supreme Lord.” Only those who have not properly studied the Vedas, Upaniṣads, Purāṇas and other scriptures talk in such a manner.

In the Eleventh Canto of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, the greatly learned Uddhava asked the Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa a wonderful question which is of great importance for the masses of today that are inclined to following others blindly. Śrī Uddhava said:

vadanti kṛṣṇa śreyāṁsi

bahūni brahma-vādināḥ

teṣāṁ vikalpa-prādhānyam

utāho eka-mukhyatā

(Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.14.1)

“On the basis of the Vedas, learned sages have described many methods for the welfare of the soul. O Kṛṣṇa, are they all correct? In other words, is whatever one believes correct, or is there one method amongst all that is supreme?”

Kṛṣṇa replied, “O Uddhava, have I not explained anything to you?”

“Yes You have, my Lord,” replied Uddhava with folded hands. “What did I explain?”

“O Lord, You have just described unalloyed devotional service (niṣkāma-bhakti).”

bhavatodāhṛtaḥ svāmin

bhakti-yogo 'napekṣitaḥ

nirasya sarvataḥ saṅgam

yena tvayy āviśen manaḥ

(Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.14.2)

“Whatever we focus our mind on or have attachment for is what our whole attention will be drawn towards, and what we will have a desire for. As a result, even while worshipping You, we will not be able to engage our minds in You. This is the reason why devotees with material desires (sakāma-bhaktas) worship the Supreme Lord but are unable to concentrate on Him. Perhaps that is why You have instructed me about niṣkāma-bhakti, so that my mind may give up all kinds of attachments and become absorbed in You alone,” said Uddhava.

“Then what is the reason for your doubt?” Śrī Kṛṣṇa asked Uddhava.

Uddhava replied, “O Lord, my doubt is that every ṛṣi and muni (sage) explains a different idea and, surprisingly, each sage claims that his method is enunciated in the Vedas. For example, Jaiminī Ṛṣi quoted evidence from the Vedas and revealed the path of karma-mīmāṃsā. He taught that karma is the only means of

achieving one’s eternal welfare. Another greatly learned sage, Kapila Muni has said, also on the basis of the Vedas, that sāṅkhya- yoga is the only means of achieving ultimate happiness. Gautama Ṛṣi contradicted the above two and taught that the best means of achieving the ultimate goal is nyāya (the science of logic). The evidence for this also comes from the Vedas. Patañjali Ṛṣi, however, claims that the path of yoga is the best method. The evidence for this is also in the Vedas. Kaṇāda Ṛṣi established the philosophy of Vaiśeṣika and described it as being the teachings of the Vedas. In this way, every ṛṣi has given a different method on the basis of the Vedas and has described his own method as being enunciated in the Vedas. But You have instructed me about unalloyed devotion. Is Your instruction not substantiated by the Vedas? Is it outside of the Vedas?”

vedaiś ca sarvair aham eva vedyo vedānta-kṛd veda-vid eva cāham

(Bhagavad-gītā 15.15)

The Supreme Lord Kṛṣṇa says, “All the Vedas establish Me alone; they make Me known, and I am the supreme confidential subject matter of the Vedas. I am also the Vedas. I am the Supreme Knowable as well as the Supreme Knower.”

The Supreme Lord Himself is saying that He is the Veda or ultimate knowledge. Can any other method of achieving the Supreme Lord be substantiated by the Vedas, leaving aside what Śrī Kṛṣṇa—the very form of Complete Knowledge—says about how to attain Him? Never. There may be many ancillary topics discussed in the Vedas. However, the actual subject matter of the Vedas is only devotion to Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

One may ask, “If the Vedas teach only niṣkāma-bhakti to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, then why have Kapila, Patañjali, Jaiminī and other sages taught something different?” The answer to this question is that knowledge can never be attained by ignorance. Only Knowledge can give knowledge; only Knowledge can exchange, expand and propagate knowledge. How did Lord Brahmā achieve that absolute knowledge of the Supreme Lord? At the beginning of the material creation, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Form of Complete Knowledge, first gave His divine knowledge to Lord Brahmā. In due course of time, Brahmā gave this knowledge to his eldest son, Svāyambhuva Manu. Manu, in turn, gave that knowledge to the seven great

sages headed by Bhṛgu, known as the Prajāpatis. Subsequently, this knowledge was passed on to the offspring of the sages, namely, the demigods, demons, Guhyakas, human beings, Siddhas, Cāraṇas, etc. Śrī Kṛṣṇa says that those who received this knowledge were of different natures. Some were in the mode of goodness, some in the mode of passion and some in the mode of ignorance. Due to the influence of these different modes of nature, their ability to understand the knowledge was also variegated. Therefore, all of them understood and preached this message of the Vedas according to their individual natures.

evam prakṛti-vaicitryād

bhidyante matayo nṛṇām

pāramparyeṇa keṣāñcit

pāṣaṇḍa-matayo 'pare

(Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.14.8)

Whoever studied the Veda understood its purport according to their own natures, and then explained it accordingly. Whoever heard those explanations understood them differently, according to their own individual capacities, and when those people, in turn, explained the Vedas, their listeners were again of different natures. In this way, the one Veda came to have many purports. Although everyone is giving a correct explanation according to his individual understanding, the authentic purport of the Vedas is something else. For example, you have all come to the maṭha to hear this lecture. If three people, each wearing glasses of different colours, were to arrive here right now and observe us, how would they describe what they had seen?

The person wearing blue-coloured glasses would say, “Today I visited Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha where a huge religious gathering was being held. I saw that there were many hundreds of people present but they were all wearing blue clothes.” The person wearing red-coloured glasses would say, “No, I also went with you. I saw with my own eyes that everybody was wearing red clothes.” And the person wearing yellow-coloured glasses would say, “No, no, you are both

wrong. I saw that everyone was listening to the lecture wearing yellow clothes.” Now you see, nobody would be telling a lie from his own point of view, but their observations would all be incorrect and not the same. This is because the medium through which they would be observing would be of different colours. Had they been using colourless glasses, their observations would not have been contradictory. Similarly, when the one Veda is understood by people with different natures, different explanations arise. None of the sages is wrong from his own perspective, but in actuality, none of their explanations are correct. This is because, like the colours of the glasses, the medium by which they wish to understand the Vedas is covered by the modes of the external potency (māyā). When one surrenders to the sad-guru, the pure devotee who is not enveloped by the external potency of the Supreme Lord, who is beyond the three modes of nature, who is unattached and desireless, and hears from him about the Complete Knowledge, then he will be able to understand the actual meaning of the Vedas. In relation to the Absolute Truth, the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad (6.8) says:

*na tasya kāryaṁ karaṇaṁ ca vidyate na tat-samaś cābhyadhikaś ca drśyate
parāsyā śaktir vividhaiva śrūyate svābhāvikī jñāna-bala-kriyā ca*

This verse says that in His transcendental spiritual Form, the Supreme Lord is present everywhere simultaneously. There is no one equal to Him, what to speak of greater than Him. Besides that, it is easy to understand that the All-powerful Absolute Truth— One without a second—cannot be many. Therefore, one cannot know the Absolute Truth without His desiring it. If one could know or capture the Supreme Lord by some method, then that method would be equal to or greater than the Supreme Lord. I have one opinion; you have another opinion—in this way, innumerable living entities will have innumerable opinions. Would it be correct to say that all these opinions are valid methods of achieving the Absolute? Whatever you or I can achieve by our desire would have to be inferior to us. In other words, that Absolute Truth would not be the Supreme Lord but our servant. If the Absolute Truth were subservient to us, then the Complete would not remain complete; the Infinite would not remain infinite. In the śruti, it is said that there is no one equal to or greater than the Supreme Lord. Thus, one cannot know or understand the Supreme Lord without taking absolute shelter of Him (śaraṇāgati), expecting His grace, and without the desire of the

Supreme Lord Himself. Therefore, unalloyed devotion is the only means of achieving the Absolute

Truth. The statements of those who say that all opinions are valid means of achieving the Absolute, or that there is one destination but different paths to it, are without rhyme or reason. They are neither supported by the scriptures nor are their arguments very sound.

Sambandha-jñāna: what is your relationship?

In 1954, after a lecture on Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, an elderly lady approached Śrīla Mādhava Mahārāja with a question. This highly relevant question was as follows:

For the last fifty years without fail, the elderly lady had been coming to the temple, taking darśana of the holy deities, attending āratī ceremonies, circumambulating the temple, singing kīrtana, glorifying Śrī Hari and listening to Bhagavad-gītā, Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, Rāmāyana, and other scriptures whenever the opportunity arose. Now she was old and unfortunately, despite all this, not a grain of devotion or love for Sītā-Rāma had sprouted in her heart. Instead, the pull of attraction for her children and grandchildren had increased. If love for Bhagavān had not grown under these circumstances, then what could be the use of such practices and disciplines?

Śrīla Gurudeva was very pleased to hear this particular question. He announced to the gathering that since everyone should be there to hear the reply, he would therefore give it the following day.

The next day, before speaking on the scriptures, Śrīla Gurudeva asked the elderly lady whether or not she had ever requested anyone to explain the true identity of Śrī Sītā-Rāma, her own identity, the world and her relationship with Śrī Sītā-Rāma. Had she instead, attended the temple as a matter of course without feeling the need to be inquisitive?

“Without awareness of any relationship, love for Bhagavān cannot be experienced. It is the knowledge of relationship that gives birth to love. Even in our day to day lives, whenever someone desires to know our identity, we rattle off a string of relationships such as: ‘I am the child of that mother or father,’ ‘I am the mother or father of that child,’ ‘I am the husband or wife of that person’ and so on. Carrying with us the concept that our identity is comprised of such mundane types of relationships, we visit the temple, view the deities, participate in Hari-kīrtana, listen to Hari- kathā and go through the motions of observing various religious practices. However, we find that these observances do not take us to Śrī Hari but instead, root us ever more firmly in our family and friend relationships. These works are punya or dharma (actions performed for future merits). They are not bhakti or devotion. The false ego drives man to fruitive activity. This petty ego must be discarded. However our real ego, ‘I am the eternal servant of the Supreme Lord’, should remain. With the false knowledge that we belong to this world, we work for the sake of our wife, children and so on. Even when we visit the temple, it is for the interest of this false self and for all that is seemingly connected with or related to it. We do not go to the temple for Śrī Bhagavān’s sake. Thus, it is only natural that we display the tendency to follow the dictates of our ego, falsely thinking that therein lies our self-interest.

The day I realize that I belong to Śrī Bhagavān and that all my relationships are with Śrī Bhagavān, then my real self will become manifested and spontaneously, all my actions will be for Śrī Bhagavān and Śrī Bhagavān alone. Identifying my interests with those of Śrī Bhagavān, I shall now surrender myself, and all that belongs to that self, to Śrī Bhagavān. Only in that specific situation is love and devotion for Śrī Bhagavān possible. The grace of the bonafide guru or preceptor will enable us to realise to whom we are actually related. Prior to this knowledge of relationship, it is not possible to have any idea of Śrī Bhagavān. When we do not exert much effort to understand the nature of this relationship, our realisation is understandably delayed. After establishing this relationship, we can start our sādhana (abhidheya spiritual practices) and begin to understand our real needs (prayojana). The scriptures of sanātana-dharma and all the wise sages have discussed three important points in great detail: 1. sambandha— the conditioned soul’s relationship with the Supreme Lord, 2. abhidheya—the regulated activities for reviving one’s relationship with the Supreme Lord and 3. prayojana—the ultimate goal of life to be attained by the conditioned soul, i.e., Kṛṣṇa-prema, love of God.

Therefore, in spiritual life the first step is toward sambandha- jñāna—knowledge

of relationships.”

Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Absolute Truth

If we analyse the Absolute Truth, we will find that Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the Absolute Principle because He is the Absolute Brahman or Param Brahman (Supreme Brahman). In response to those who claim that the formless, non-variegated Brahman is the Absolute Cause, Lord Kṛṣṇa says in Bhagavad-gītā:

brahmaṇo hi pratiṣṭhāham amṛtasyāvyayasya ca

śāśvatasya ca dharmasya sukhasyaikāntikasya ca

(Bhagavad-gītā 14.27)

“I am the basis of the formless, impersonal Brahman.” Pratiṣṭhā means ‘basis’, ‘background’, or ‘in abundance’. Brahman is blissful but in Kṛṣṇa, that bliss is in abundance. This means that Kṛṣṇa’s bliss is infinite and is the basis even of brahmānanda. ‘Ānandaṁ brahma’ is a Vedic aphorism but ānanda, rasa, pleasure and bliss personified is none other than Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The evidence for this:

raso vai saḥ rasam hy evāyaṁ labdhvānandī bhavati

(Taittirīya Upaniṣad 2.7.1)

“Those who attain the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the reservoir of pleasure, actually become transcendently blissful.”

That is why it is said that the Absolute Truth, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa, is also the cause of Brahman. However, Brahman, Paramātmā and Bhagavān are one in principle. It is said in Śrīmad Bhāgavatam:

vadanti tat tattva-vidas tattvaṁ yaj jñānam advayam

brahmeti paramātmetye bhagavān iti śabdyate

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 1.2.11)

“Those transcendentalists who know the nature of the unknowable substance that is beyond the reach of the senses, describe that absolute or infinite knowledge with words such as Brahman, Paramātmā and Bhagavān.”

Hence, Brahman, Paramātmā and Bhagavān are all identical and full of knowledge. Then what is the difference?

In answer to this, it is said that wherever there is absolute knowledge without personality, it is known as Brahman. It is this formless, non-variegated knowledge, which is known as impersonal Brahman by the common man. The scriptures describe it as ‘mahato mahiyān’ or ‘bigger than the biggest’. This is a partial understanding of Bhagavān. Paramātmā is also a partial representation of Bhagavān. The scriptures describe this as ‘aṇor aṇiyān’ or ‘smaller than the smallest’. You can obtain this knowledge by going through Viṣṇu-sahasranāma (The Thousand Names of Viṣṇu). Apart from this, whatever possesses minuteness, greatness and wholeness is called Bhagavān and that Bhagavān, the Absolute Truth, is Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Bhagavān is one without a second, but He can have numerous pastimes (līlā). In His pastimes of opulence (aiśvarya-līlā), Śrī Kṛṣṇa is Absolute Truth Lord Rāmacandra but with different pastimes.

Lord Rāmacandra’s pastime is that of maryādā-puruṣottama, which symbolises righteousness, but līlā-puruṣottama Lord Kṛṣṇa’s pastimes are sweet. These are pastimes of sweetness, beauty and munificence, and Gaurahari’s pastimes are similar. However, Gaurahari’s līlā is predominantly munificence while Kṛṣṇa’s

līlā is predominantly sweetness. In principle, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Nārāyaṇa, Rāma, Gaurahari, Matsya, Kūrma, Varāha and Nṛsimha are all the same. They are all viṣṇu-tattva and Their devotees are called Vaiṣṇavas. A servant of Rāma is called a Vaiṣṇava, a servant of Nṛsimha is called a Vaiṣṇava and a servant of Nārāyaṇa is also called a Vaiṣṇava. Even the worshippers of the Lord's incarnations such as Matsya, Kūrma and Varāha are called Vaiṣṇavas. That is why it is said that in principle that They are all the same, but there are differences in Their pastimes and according to the pastimes, there are different levels of pleasure.

Among all the pastimes of the Lord, only Śrī Kṛṣṇa's pastimes manifest all the mellows (rasas). Out of innumerable mellows, the scriptures describe twelve main mellows of which the following five are principal: neutrality (śānta), servitude (dāsyā), fraternity (sakhyā), parenthood (vātsalya) and conjugal love (mādhurya). The indirect mellows are laughter (hāsyā), wonder (adbhuta), anger (raudra), ghastliness (bībhatsa), chivalry (vīra), mercy (karuṇa) and dread (bhayānaka). The personification of all twelve mellows is Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa. These twelve mellows are not manifest in totality in any other form of the Lord. In principle, however, all avatāras (manifestations) are complete. In other avatāras of Lord Kṛṣṇa, one or more mellows are manifest but not all—one can find all twelve mellows in totality only in Lord Kṛṣṇa. Through His worship, one can taste the mellow that corresponds to one's particular inclination. Therefore, the only worshipable object is Śrī Kṛṣṇa. He is the Absolute and Ultimate Truth. Viṣṇu means the ultimate form of Absolute Brahman. The ultimate form of that Absolute Brahman is Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the embodiment of absolute bliss. Hence, He attracts other Viṣṇu incarnations as well as other living entities; He derives pleasure from them and gives pleasure to them. Therefore, the Absolute Truth is Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The word Kṛṣṇa is composed of 'kṛṣ' and 'ṇa', meaning one who attracts everyone and gives them bliss. Therefore, in the opinion of the scriptures, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the Absolute Truth and Param Brahman.

Many people accept śakti as their object of worship, considering it to be the Absolute Truth. To them I want to say that śakti is not an undesirable thing but it can be known only by knowing the possessor thereof. Śakti means 'attribute' or 'potency'. For example, if an object is conscious, its energy is called spiritual potency and if the object is unconscious, its energy is called material potency. It should be emphasized, however, that śakti has no separate existence. Again, one can know śakti only by knowing its possessor. That is why śakti is called an essential principle, because the identity of śakti is pursuant to the identity of the possessor of śakti.

The Absolute Truth is the possessor of śakti. Therefore, śakti alone cannot be considered to be the Absolute Truth. We find in the scriptures: śakti-śakimataro 'bhedaḥ, which means that śakti (energy) and śaktimān (the possessor of energy) are non-different. For example, you and your energy are non-different because without you, there is no independent existence of your energy. You are not energy but its cause, and hence your energy has to work under you. So it can be seen that there is also a difference between you and your energy. Hence, by reasoning and by scriptural evidence, śakti cannot be considered to be the Absolute Truth. Apart from this, those who consider Gaṇeśa or Sūrya to be the Absolute Truth are few in number. Many people consider Śiva to be the Absolute Truth but those who have studied the Vedas and Purāṇas thoroughly or who are going through the Vedas know that the first puruṣa-avatāra, Kāraṇodakaśāyī Mahā-Viṣṇu, appeared from Saṅkarṣaṇa. When He glanced over māyā, infinite universes appeared. Kāraṇodakaśāyī Viṣṇu then entered into each of the universes through His plenary expansion, the second puruṣa-avatāra, Garbhodakaśāyī Viṣṇu. From His perspiration, Garbhodakaśāyī Viṣṇu created an ocean. Brahmā appeared from His lotus-navel and Śiva appeared from between His eyebrows. The second puruṣa-avatāra again manifested a plenary expansion of Himself as the third puruṣa-avatāra, Kṣīrodakaśāyī Viṣṇu, who is the maintainer and protector of all the universes. It is this Viṣṇu who is situated in the hearts of all living entities as Paramātmā. One can find this subject matter described in the Puruṣa-sūkta hymn of the Vedas. It is said in Brahma-saṁhitā that Śiva and Govinda are essentially the same:

*kṣīraṁ yathā dadhi vikāra-viśeṣa-yogāt
sañjāyate na hi tataḥ pṛthag asti hetoḥ
yaḥ śambhutām api tathā samupaiti kāryād
govindam ādi-puruṣaṁ tam ahaṁ bhajāmi*
(Brahma-saṁhitā 5.45)

If we add sour acids to milk, it turns into yogurt (dadhi). It is not that milk and yogurt are two different substances. Similarly, when Śrī Kṛṣṇa accepts the mode

of ignorance to destroy the cosmic manifestation, He accepts śambhutā or the form of Rudra. Therefore, the Absolute Truth is only Śrī Kṛṣṇa or Govinda.

There is one more matter worth discussing here: Which form of Kṛṣṇa is supremely worshipable—Dvārakādhīśa Kṛṣṇa, Mathurādhīśa Kṛṣṇa or Vrajendranandana Kṛṣṇa?

According to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s school of thought, Vrajendranandana Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Worshipable Truth because only in Him are all mellows manifest completely; so much so that even Nārāyaṇa runs to embrace Kṛṣṇa upon seeing this form of the Lord—although both Nārāyaṇa and Kṛṣṇa are one in principle. This is Kṛṣṇa-tattva. This is the philosophy of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu and Śrīmad Bhāgavatam.

Śrī Bhagavān

The following are excerpts from the speeches of Śrīla Gurudeva during Śrī Kṛṣṇa Janmāṣṭamī at the Calcutta Maṭha between 1968 to 1974.

The Devotee and Bhagavān

If we accept the concept of Bhagavān, then we have to accept the concept of bhaga also. If we use the word dhanavān (“wealthy”) but exclude the word dhana (“wealth”), then the word dhanavān becomes meaningless. It is the same situation with bhaga and Bhagavān. He who possesses dhana (wealth) is dhanavān. Similarly, He who possesses bhaga is Bhagavān. Bhaga means majesty (aiśvarya) or potency (śakti). Therefore, Bhagavān is He who possesses majesty and potency. The word Bhagavān does not specifically define the type of potency or energy involved. Therefore, Bhagavān is He who possesses all kinds of potencies or energies that could possibly exist. Thus, Bhagavān is the Omnipotent One:

aiśvaryasya samagrasya vīryasya yaśasaḥ śriyaḥ

jñāna-vairāgyayoś caiva ṣaṇṇām bhaga itīṅganā

(Viṣṇu Purāṇa 6.5.47)

One who possesses all majesty or wealth, all potency or strength, all fame, all beauty, all knowledge and all renunciation is known as Bhagavān. The fact that Bhagavān possesses all beauty implies that He is beautiful; therefore, he must possess form. However, in saying that He must possess form, we should not attempt to confine Him by the perishable limits of length, breadth and height. The internal potency (cit-śakti) of Bhagavān has as its reflection the material energy, which is subject to change and destruction. We must not attribute those faults to that which is being reflected, i.e., Bhagavān, Who has a transcendental spiritual Form. To do so would be foolish. Actually, Ultimate Existence is beyond the power of human intellect. The reflection has no real existence to speak of, but if the reflection gives the appearance of reality, then we must understand it to be a shadow reality—an unreal reality! Since a shadow is not real, we should not expect to derive true knowledge of reality from it. The śrutis say:

apāṇi-pādo javano grahītā

paśyaty acakṣuḥ sa śṛṇoty akarṇaḥ

sa vetti vedyam na ca tasyā vettā

tam āhur agryam puruṣam mahāntam

(Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad 3.19)

Bhagavān does not have limbs, yet He accepts and moves. He can see without

eyes, He can hear without ears, etc. The meaning of these apparently contradictory statements is that Bhagavān does not have a material form like ours, which is made up of material elements. On the contrary, He has a transcendental spiritual Form. In truth, because Govinda, the Cause of all causes, possesses form, we see so many forms in the universe. Without there being form in the cause, there can be no form in the effect; without there being form in the source, there can be no form in the reflection. Logically, something cannot come from nothing.

I have already said that if we admit to the existence of Bhagavān, we also have to admit to the existence of His energy or śakti. We cannot admit to the existence of Bhagavān without śakti. Even though Bhagavān is omnipotent, there are three predominating śaktis known respectively as the internal potency (cit-śakti), the external potency (māyā-śakti) and poised in between these two are His manifested living beings known as taṭasthā- or jīva-śakti. The śakti which takes us to the heart of Bhagavān is known as antaraṅgā-śakti (internal potency). The śakti which overwhelms and enchants us with His external features, taking us away from Bhagavān, is known as bahiraṅgā-śakti (external potency). The internal potency takes us towards, and the external potency takes us away from Bhagavān. The internal potency performs the unalloyed service of Bhagavān; thus, it is referred to by the term bhakta (devotee). Bhakta and Bhagavān are one non-dual substance. That one substance is composed of two moods or aspects: the predominating and the predominated, the enjoyer and the enjoyed, the served and the servitor, the object of worship and the worshipper.

advaya-jñāna-tattva kṛṣṇa—svayaṁ bhagavān

‘svarūpa-śakti’ rūpe tāṁra haya avasthāna

(Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 22.7)

“Kṛṣṇa is the nondual Absolute Truth, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Although He is one, He maintains different personal expansions and energies for His pastimes.”

The svarūpa-śakti (cit-śakti) has three divisions: (1) sandhinī, by which existence

is preserved; (2) *saṁvit*, by which everything is known or perceived; and (3) *hlādinī*, by which activity and bliss is generated. Śrī Baladeva is the principle of existence (*sandhinī-śakti*). Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the Consciousness Who enables awareness of our own existence (*saṁvit-śakti*). Śrī Rādhikā is *hlādinī-śakti* or the pleasure-giving potency. The *śakti* that brings the greatest joy to Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the essence of all that is bliss, and is the very form of *mahā-bhāva* (the highest stage of Divine Love). She is the daughter of Vṛṣabhānu—Śrīmatī Rādhikā. Śrī Nanda Mahārāja and Śrīmatī Yaśodā-mātā, who serve in parental mellow (*vātsalya-rasa*), are the best among devotees because they too give supreme joy to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Today is the Ānandotsava, the festival of joy of Śrī Nanda Mahārāja. With his grace, we may also be blessed with the grace of Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

śrutim apare smṛtim itare bhāratam anye bhajantu bhava-bhītāḥ

aham iha nandaṁ vande yasyālinde paraṁ brahma

(Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 19.96, quoted in Padyāvalī 126)

“Those who are afraid of material existence may worship the *śruti*, *smṛti* or *Mahābhārata*, but I pay my obeisances to Nanda Mahārāja because Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the Param Brahman, becomes trapped by the love of Śrī Nanda and crawls around as a baby in his courtyard.”

śrī-rājovāca

nandaḥ kim akarod brahman

śreya evaṁ mahodayam

yaśodā ca mahā-bhāgā

papau yasyāḥ stanaṁ hariḥ

(Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.8.46)

“Mahārāja Parīkṣit asked, ‘What pious merits did Nanda Mahārāja accumulate by which Śrī Kṛṣṇa came to him as his son? What are Yaśodā’s past merits? She, too, is fortunate that the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa called her “Mother” and drank her breast milk.’”

Once, Lord Brahmā abducted the cows and cowherd boys of Vṛndāvana to test Kṛṣṇa. However, as a result, he found himself deluded by Kṛṣṇa’s mystic potency. Realising his folly, Brahmā then took absolute shelter of the Lotus Feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Showering adorations, Brahmā praised the cowherd damsels (gopīs) of Vraja and their great fortune—their prema or unalloyed love for Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

aho bhāgyam aho bhāgyam nanda-gopa-vrajaukasām

yan-mitraṁ paramānandaṁ pūrṇa brahma sanātanam

(Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.14.32)

“There are no limits to the good fortune of Nanda Mahārāja and the residents of Vraja. The personification of bliss, the eternal, Supreme Brahman, has manifested Himself as their dear friend.”

The Significance of the Worship of Śrī Kṛṣṇa

To understand the significance of the worship of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, we first have to know who Śrī Kṛṣṇa is and what constitutes His real self. The significance of His worship rests upon His remarkable divine personality. The śāstras define the etymological meaning of the word Kṛṣṇa as follows:

kṛṣir bhū-vācakah śabdo

ṇaś ca nirvṛti-vācakah

tayor aikyaṁ param brahma

kṛṣṇa ity abhidhīyate

(Mahābhārata, Udyoga-parva 71.4)

“The word Kṛṣṇa is composed of the root kṛṣ meaning bhu, the shelter of all existence, and the word ṇa, meaning nirvṛti or the form of supreme bliss. Combined, they form the word Kṛṣṇa which signifies Param Brahman, the Supreme Absolute Truth.”

The word Kṛṣṇa means “self-existing bliss.” The Vedānta has defined this as ānandaṁ brahma, and:

raso vai saḥ rasam hy evāyaṁ labdhvānandī bhavati (Taittirīya Upaniṣad 2.7)

“He is that rasa (ānanda or bliss). One who drinks that rasa becomes full of bliss.”

In another sense, the word Kṛṣṇa means kṛṣ: “to attract” (karṣaṇe) and ṇa: “giving bliss.” The one who attracts all and gives them bliss, and who is blissful Himself, is known as Kṛṣṇa. In other words, Kṛṣṇa means “all-attractive” and “all-bliss-giving.” He cannot be all-attractive without being superexcellent in every respect. When He exhibits His aspect of being smaller than the smallest, Kṛṣṇa is known as Paramātmā. When He exhibits His aspect of being greater than the greatest, He is known as Brahman. Then again, reconciling both His aṇu (microcosmic) and vibhu (macrocosmic) natures and accepting a medium-sized Form, Śrī Kṛṣṇa performs wonderful pastimes of infinite variegatedness.

vadanti tat tattva-vidas

tattvaṁ yaj jñānam advayam

brahmeti paramātmeti

bhagavān iti śabdyate

(Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.2.11)

Knowers of the truth call that non-dual, absolute knowledge tattva—the Absolute Truth. This non-dual knowledge is referred to by the words Brahman, Paramātmā or Bhagavān. The word Brahman signifies the largest (bṛhattva); Paramātmā, the smallest (aṇutva); and Bhagavān, the all-opulent (sarvaiśvāmayatva: possessing all riches, all strength, all fame, all beauty, all knowledge and all renunciation). In other words, it encompasses the largest, the smallest, the middle, and everything else in existence. The word Bhagavān reveals all the different aspects of the Absolute Truth. The jñānī experiences that non-dual tattva as Brahman, the yogī realises Him as Paramātmā, and the bhakta sees Him as Bhagavān. Bhagavān manifests infinite pastimes in infinite Forms, among which Śrī Kṛṣṇa is His original Form (svayaṁ-rūpa).

ete cāmśa-kalāḥ puṁsaḥ

kṛṣṇas tu bhagavān svayam

indrāri-vyākulaṁ lokam

mṛḍayanti yuge yuge

(Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.3.28)

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the origin (avatārī) of all other avatāras (divine descents). He is Bhagavān Himself.

yāñra bhagavattā haite anyera bhagavattā

‘svayam-bhagavān’-śabdera tāhātei sattā

(Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādī-līlā 2.88)

Due to His (Kṛṣṇa’s) divinity, others are divine. In the Brahma- saṁhitā (5.1), Kṛṣṇa is described as being the Cause of all causes— the Supreme Lord:

īśvaraḥ paramaḥ kṛṣṇaḥ sac-cid-ānanda-vigrahaḥ

anādir ādir govindaḥ sarva-kāraṇa-kāraṇam

Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu has also described Nandanandana Śrī Kṛṣṇa as being the highest object of worship. All possible needs of the living entity can be completely fulfilled only by the worship of Śrī Nandanandana Kṛṣṇa. How, then, will we be able to understand all these words? So long as we maintain an air of prejudice, this same prejudice will blur our vision. One has to be worthy of understanding the science of the Absolute (bhagavat-tattva); unless one acquires that qualification, despite having considerable mundane worthiness, realisation of Bhagavān will not be possible. If we are not willing to work to reach that level, we should not expect to acquire that privilege. We cannot know Him through arrogance because He is Unchallengeable Truth. He has no cause, and there is no one equal to Him, what to speak of greater than Him. Therefore, except for the grace of Bhagavān, there is no other method of knowing Him. To know Bhagavān, there are certain conditions that must be met. Surrender yourself with all humility. Be inquisitive, in a reverential manner, about all that is spiritual. Serve, with an attitude of surrender, the spiritual master who has knowledge of the spiritual. Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā (4.34) has offered this instruction:

tad viddhi praṇipātena paripraśnena sevayā

upadekśyanti te jñānam jñāninas tattva-darśinaḥ

Getting the Grace of Śrī Bhagavān

Since Bhagavān is beyond the confines of our limited intellect, we cannot know Him by virtue of our own merit alone. If that were so, then the very logic of Śrī Bhagavān being the all-opulent Supreme Lord, Omnipotent and Infinite, becomes negated. The only way of knowing Bhagavān is by the desire of Bhagavān Himself. To act according to the desire of Bhagavān is to have prīti (affection), or bhakti. If we act according to Bhagavān’s desire or, in other words, if we follow the course laid down by Bhagavān in the śrutis and smṛtis, then this will be the very means of achieving the grace of Bhagavān. That being said, how are we to know those rules laid down in the scriptures that are dear to Bhagavān? The answer to this is, we must seek the company of devotees and take shelter of a pure devotee.

There are two types of bhakti—vaidhī-bhakti and rāgānugā- bhakti. The first is the trodden path of scriptural rules and regulations, and the second is the blazing fire of transcendental love and passion. Śrī Kṛṣṇa can only be caught by rāgānugā-bhakti. Thus, sang one devotee:

śrutim apare smṛtim itare bhāratam anye bhajantu bhava-bhītāḥ

aham iha nandaṁ vande yasyālinde param brahma

(Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 19.96, quoted in Padyāvalī 126)

“Those who are afraid of material existence may worship the śruti, smṛti or Mahābhārata, but I sing praises to Nanda Mahārāja, in whose courtyard plays the Param Brahman, Śrī Kṛṣṇa.”

Nanda Mahārāja and Mother Yaśodā have trapped the Infinite with their pure love. If I could even reach the doors of such a devotee, would there then be any doubt that I would definitely have darśana of Bhagavān? There are two aspects that I will carefully endeavour to enable you to understand. The devotee of Bhagavān always desires to please Bhagavān. If anyone else tries to please Bhagavān, then the devotee becomes that person's slave. Then again, Bhagavān wants the devotee to be happy. If one loves the devotee, then Bhagavān becomes captured by that person. That is why those who love and serve Bhagavān's devotee can easily win the blessings of Bhagavān's grace. Remember the saying, "If you love me, love my dog." It is not difficult to love Bhagavān. Knowledge, wealth, beauty, power, etc., are not required in this love.

janmaīśvarya-śruta-śrībhir

edhamāna-madaḥ pumān

naivārhaty abhidhātum vai

tvām akiñcana-gocaram

(Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.8.26)

"Those who are intoxicated with their birth (social status), wealth, learning and beauty are incapable of uttering the Name of Kṛṣṇa, which can be taken by those who are bereft of all material assets."

If all the pride in the world should occupy all the space in my heart, if I expend all my energies to chase after wealth, sex and power, then how can Śrī Bhagavān find a place in such as my heart? Although a welcome sign hangs at the gate, the inside is cluttered up with so much rubbish that the invited guest has to turn away, being unable to find a place to sit. In like manner, it is no use to externally extend a welcome to Bhagavān if the inside is clogged up with unwanted desires. Bhagavān may very well come, but He will go away without finding a place to sit.

Devotional Practice

What is Faith?

A lecture delivered at the Kumbha- Melā in Haridwar.

You have all assembled here in order to have darśana of, pay obeisances to and take bath in the holy Ganges which has emerged from the lotus feet of the Supreme Lord. More importantly, you have had an opportunity to take darśana of and pay your respects to all the Vaiṣṇavas who have assembled here from afar. I have firm faith that the Lord will be happy with all these deeds.

Whenever one acts in relation to the Lord or for the pleasure of the Supreme Lord, whether unknowingly or without proper understanding, then this is known as bhakti-unmukhi-sukṛti— a pious deed that culminates in pure devotion. As the number of such pious deeds increase, in due course of time, one gets an opportunity to associate with a pure devotee of the Lord (sādhū- saṅga).

In the Bṛhan-nārādīya Purāṇa (4.33) it is said:

bhaktis tu bhagavad-bhakta- saṅgena parijāyate

sat-saṅgaḥ prāpyate pumbhiḥ sukṛtaiḥ pūrva-saṅcitaiḥ

(Hari-bhakti-vilāsa 10.279)

This means that due to pious deeds accumulated in previous births, a living entity gets the association of a sādhu and in that association, learns to discriminate between good and bad. Those who are deprived of sādhu-saṅga do not possess real knowledge and mistake sādhu for asādhu, sat for asat, and vice versa. Therefore, sādhu-saṅga is essential.

It is not easy to get sādhu-saṅga. As already mentioned, only when one has accumulated sukṛti from previous births or this birth is one given an opportunity to associate with sādhus.

This is also described in Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu (1.4.15-16):

*ādau śraddhā tataḥ sādhu- saṅgo 'tha bhajana-kriyā tato 'nārtha-nivṛttiḥ syāt
tato niṣṭhā rucis tataḥ athāsaktis tato bhāvas tataḥ premābhyudañcati
sādhakānām ayaṁ premṇaḥ prādurbhāve bhavet kramaḥ*

When a living entity accumulates sukṛti in large numbers, then that living entity develops faith (śraddhā) in the Supreme Lord. In this verse, śraddhā means viśvāsa, or firm faith. When one's faith in the Supreme Lord becomes firm, then by the influence of that faith, one practises the regulative forms of devotion under the guidance of the devotees of the Lord. Such a person gradually develops the saṁskāras or habit for liking the association of sādhus. Wherever he goes, he always yearns for sādhu-saṅga. This is the reason why one person engages in much sādhu-saṅga and another does not, even when presented with the opportunity to do so. Lord Kṛṣṇa explains this to Arjuna in Bhagavad-gītā (7.16):

*catur-vidhā bhajante mām janāḥ sukṛtino 'rjuna
ārto jijñāsur arthārthī jñānī ca bharatarṣabha*

“Only four kinds of pious men worship Me, namely the distressed (ārta), the desirer of wealth (arthārthī), the inquisitive (jijñāsu), and one who is searching for knowledge of the Absolute (jñānī). But if one has no sukṛti, or if one has the opposite—duṣkṛti—then even if one is severely distressed or in dire need of money, one never surrenders unto Me.”

Out of these four kinds of devotees, the jñānī is the best. But if even the jñānī has no accumulated sukṛti then even he does not surrender unto the Lord:

na mām duṣkṛtino mūḍhāḥ prapadyante narādhamāḥ

māyayāpahṛta-jñānā āsuram bhāvam āśritāḥ

(Bhagavad-gītā 7.15)

The Lord says that others do not surrender unto Him because they are rascals and are bewildered by His threefold external potency. Although human beings, they are the lowest among men. All their knowledge has been stolen by illusion, and they have now accepted the atheistic nature of demons. Such a person says, “Where is God? Where is Rāma? Where is Kṛṣṇa? There is no God, and even if He exists, why should we surrender unto Him?” Such a proud, duṣkṛtivān living entity does not have faith in the Supreme Lord or worship the Supreme Lord even when diseased or undergoing difficulty. In other words, only pious persons have faith in the Lord and associate with sādhus.

Sādhū-saṅga does not mean simply remaining with the sādhu, or sleeping on the sādhu’s bed. If this were so, then the lice in the sādhu’s hair or the bedbugs in the sādhu’s bed would also be associating with the sādhu. This is not real association; they are not following the sādhu but are there to suck the blood of the sādhu. The sādhu always thinks about the Supreme Lord while others always think about sense objects. Sādhū-saṅga means acting according to the order of the sādhu or according to the internal mood of the sādhu.

By associating in this manner, one will develop a mental disposition like that of

the sādhu. Saṅgāt sañjāyate kāmahaḥ (Gītā 2.62). If one associates with a thief, he develops the habits of a thief and becomes a thief himself. Similarly, if one associates with a sādhu, one becomes a sādhu oneself and is able to distinguish between good and bad. After this, one will try to learn about sad- vastu, the Supreme Lord, and in order to achieve the service of the Supreme Lord, one will surrender unto the pure devotee of the Lord.

There are two types of faith:

1. Laukika-śraddhā: customary or worldly faith.
2. Tāttvika-śraddhā: ontological faith.

If one goes to the temple, pays obeisances to the Lord or serves the devotees to satisfy the requirements of customs prevalent in the society, then this is classified as laukika-śraddhā. Tāttvika- śraddhā, however, is completely different from this.

In Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya 22.62), Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī describes the word śraddhā as follows:

‘śraddhā’-śabde—viśvāsa kahe sudṛḍha niścaya

kṛṣṇe bhakti kaile sarva-karma kṛta haya

Śraddhā means “firm faith,” i.e., to not only believe in God but to have firm faith (sudṛḍha-viśvāsa) that the Supreme Lord is the lord of all other controllers or īśvaras, that He is omnipotent, and that if we serve the Lord, all our familial, societal, political and other duties will be automatically served. If the Lord is satisfied, everybody is satisfied. This type of firm faith in the Lord is known as śraddhā according to Śrīla Kavirāja Gosvāmī.

The Lord also says in Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā (9.24):

aham hi sarva-yajñānām bhoktā ca prabhur eva ca

“I am the only enjoyer and master of all sacrifices.”

ekale īśvara kṛṣṇa, āra saba bhr̥tya (Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi 5.142)

“Lord Kṛṣṇa alone is the supreme controller, and all others are His servants.”

īśvaraḥ paramaḥ kṛṣṇaḥ sac-cid-ānanda-vigrahaḥ anādir ādir

govindaḥ sarva-kāraṇa-kāraṇam

(Brahma-saṁhitā 5.1)

Brahmājī says that Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Controller of all controllers. He is the origin of all, yet He has no origin. He brings satisfaction to the senses, He is the maintainer of the earth, and He is the only reason for the satisfaction of the soul. If one serves and worships Him, all living beings—be they human beings, animals, birds, demigods and demigoddesses—are automatically served.

devarṣi-bhūtāpta-nṛṇām pitṛṇām

na kiṅkaro nāyam ṛṇī ca rājan

sarvātmanā yaḥ śaraṇam śaraṇyam

gato mukundaṁ parihṛtya kartam

(Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.5.41)

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam says that we living entities are all indebted to the demigods, sages, forefathers, other living beings, relatives and guests, but one who surrenders unconditionally to the Supreme Lord is immediately freed of all such debts. Also, in the Fourth Canto of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, the best of devotees Śrī Nārada says, “Consider the attempt to water a large tree. You could pour water on the leaves or fruits of the tree, but the tree will not blossom or grow if watered in such an improper manner. However, if you pour water on the roots of the tree, the tree will consume that water and distribute it to all its parts and eventually, the whole tree will be nourished.” Nārada says further that when food is provided to the stomach, the food is distributed to all parts of the body. Similarly, when we serve that Supreme Lord Acyuta who is the cause of all living and non-living beings, all are automatically served:

yathā taror mūla-niṣecanena

trpyanti tat-skandha-bhujopaśākhāḥ

prāṇopahārāc ca yathendriyāṇām

tathaiva sarvārhaṇam acyutejyā

(Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.31.14)

In this verse, the Lord is called Acyuta. The word acyuta means one by whom no one is ever made to fall down, or in other words, one who has an eternal relationship with all living beings. By serving Lord Acyuta, one serves all the demigods, forefathers, parents, relatives, children and all other living entities. By serving the Lord, one fulfils all kinds of material and spiritual duties and obligations. Such firm faith in the Supreme Lord is known as śraddhā, and one who possesses this firm faith is known as śraddhālu. Only such a śraddhālu person experiences the need for sādhu-saṅga, and at that time, begins his search for sādhus. To understand this better, let us suppose that you or someone else at your home has contracted a disease but you are all unaware of it. When you find out about the disease, will you not look for a doctor immediately? Certainly you

will. If you are unable to locate a doctor near your house then you will look for him in your village and then nearby villages and then cities.

Similarly, when you come to know of the disease of repeatedly entering the material world by taking birth painfully, of suffering under the threefold material miseries and of dying with extreme agony, a disease known as bhava-vyādhī (the disease of material existence) in the scriptures, will you not look for a doctor—the sādhu—to cure such a disease? In other words, only when a living entity has tāttvika-śraddhā in the Supreme Lord will he experience the need for sādhu-saṅga and search for the sādhu. At this point, one will get sādhu-saṅga in proportion to one's faith. With the association of sādhus one acquires knowledge about right and wrong. When knowledge of sat and asat awakens in oneself, one surrenders unto the lotus feet of the spiritual master. The Hari- bhakti-vilāsa mentions that before taking initiation, the spiritual master should observe the disciple and the disciple should observe the spiritual master for at least one year. Once they develop mutual affection, love and faith, then with the mercy and instructions of his spiritual master, the disciple will be able to advance towards the supreme destination. If the disciple does not have faith in the spiritual master or if the spiritual master is a materialist or possessed of greed, anger, etc., then the disciple should not take initiation from him. Conversely, if the spiritual master does not have faith in the disciple, then the disciple will not be benefited because the spiritual master will not reveal his heart to a disciple who is wanting in faith. In other words, when the disciple has firm faith in the spiritual master, and when the spiritual master has great affection for the disciple, only then will the disciple be able to receive transcendental knowledge from the spiritual master, and on the basis of that knowledge, he will take up sādhana (spiritual practices), according to the order of the sad-guru, in order to achieve the desired goal—love of God.

All conditioned souls have four anarthas or defects which remain during the stage of sādhana¹. However, if the sādhaka (practitioner) continuously practices devotional service under the guidance of a pure devotee then all these anarthas cease.

Once free of anarthas, the mind of the sādhaka becomes firmly situated in devotional service at the Lotus Feet of his object of worship. This is known as niṣṭhā. At this stage, the restlessness of the mind ceases completely. After developing niṣṭhā, if the sādhaka continues sādhu-saṅga with increased earnestness, then he experiences joy within his heart at performing bhajana. This

stage of niṣṭhā characterised by joy is known as ruci (taste). As the sādhaka's taste for devotional service increases, his taste for material sense enjoyment averse to Kṛṣṇa decreases. When a major portion of his anarthas have vanished, the sādhaka experiences ruci characterised by persistence. This is known as āsakti (attachment). After reaching this level, the sādhaka works solely for the pleasure of the Supreme Lord and His devotees. He becomes agitated if unable to perform bhajana. At this point, he has achieved his life's objective. It is only up to here that the living entity has to practise sādhana or regulated devotional service.

When this āsakti becomes fully developed, it is known as bhāva (spiritual sentiment), rati (attachment) or premāṅkura (a sprout of prema). At this stage, the devotee's heart melts with love. When this bhāva attains a stage of undeviating possessiveness (mamatā) for the object of worship, it is known as prema, or transcendental Divine Love. This prema is the ultimate and supreme goal of every living entity. A living entity at this stage has achieved its highest attainment. At this stage, the four kinds of liberation appear insignificant or abhorrent to the living entity, what to speak of the goals of dharma, artha, or kāma.

Notes:

1. The four anarthas are:

1. Svarūpa-bhrama: (Misconception of self) In reality, the constitutional position of the jīva (living entity) is that he is an eternal servitor of the Supreme Lord. The jīva's inherent duty is to serve the Supreme Lord, but when he forgets the Supreme Lord, the Lord's police force of māyā punishes the forgetful jīva by sending him to the prison house of the material world. After entering the material world, the jīva receives designations provided by māyā according to his karma. Just as one who has studied law becomes a lawyer, or one who has studied medicine becomes a doctor, or similarly, a teacher, minister, prime minister, etc., the jīva acquires various kinds of material designations. Upon receiving these designations, the materially conditioned jīva proudly begins to think, "I am a lawyer," "I am a doctor," "I am a teacher," "I am a prime minister," etc.

Apart from these, there are more subtle designations such as, “I am an Indian,” “I am a Pakistani,” “I am an American,” “I am an African,” etc.

Even more subtle designations are, “I am a brāhmaṇa,” “I am a kṣatriya,” “I am a vaiśya,” etc.

Still more subtle designations are, “I am wealthy,” “I am poor,” “I am strong,” “I am weak,” “I am a woman,” “I am a man,” etc.

In this way, the jīva becomes entrapped by the designations that accompany a multitude of material bodies and forgets his true constitutional position—who he really is. Apart from this, he becomes illusioned about the actual identity of the Supreme Lord and of the sādhu, by which he mistakes the sādhu for asādhu, the Vaiṣṇava for avaiṣṇava, and vice versa. In the language of the scriptures, this is known as svarūpa-bhrama.

2. Asat-tṛṣṇā: (Evil non-eternal desires) Where there is svarūpa- bhrama, there will also be asat-tṛṣṇā; if I consider myself to be the body, then it is certain that I will have a thirst for material objects. In other words, when I consider myself to be asat, then my goal will also be asat. This thirst or desire for objects of enjoyment is known as asat-tṛṣṇā.

3. Aparādha: (Propensity to commit offence) There are ten offences to be avoided when chanting the Holy Name, such as blaspheming the devotees, disobeying the spiritual master, etc. Similarly, there are 32 to 64 offences to be avoided while worshipping the Supreme Lord. These offences have been described in the scriptures.

4. Hṛdaya-daurbalya: (Weakness of heart) This defect of the jīva also arises from svarūpa-bhrama. Having forgotten his true identity, the poor living entity has no knowledge that he is not this perishable body but a soul that can never be cut by any weapons, nor burnt by fire, nor withered by the wind, nor moistened by water. The jīva is ever-young and immortal, but on account of not knowing his true identity, he mistakes the dismantling of the body composed of five material elements (ether, earth, water, wind and fire) into its constituents to be his own death. He is afraid of death at every moment. In this way, he becomes overwhelmed by sorrow at the death of his temporary, false relatives and kinsmen. All theessee sseennttiimmeenntts of the living entity are known as hṛdaya-daurbalyaa.

The greatness of Holy Name

here are two types of devotion: vaidhi-bhakti, devotion stimulated and maintained by following scriptural injunctions, and rāgānuga-bhakti, spontaneous and natural devotion, without the necessity of any external provocation. This rāgānuga-bhakti is intense, divine love and passion beyond the confines and limits of the material senses and mundane emotions. It is very, very rare. For the general seeker, it is better to follow the channelled path of vaidhi-bhakti, or customary devotional practise. The scriptures known as ‘tantra’ mention thousands of methodologies. Śrī Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu refers to sixty-four distinct methods. Śrīmad Bhāgavatam especially advocates the following nine processes of bhakti:

1. Hearing the glories of the transcendental holy name, form, qualities, paraphernalia and pastimes of the Lord.
2. Chanting the glories of the transcendental holy name, form, qualities, paraphernalia and pastimes of the Lord.
3. Remembering the glories of the transcendental holy name, form, qualities, paraphernalia and pastimes of the Lord.
4. Serving the lotus feet of the Lord.
5. Offering the Lord respectful worship.
6. Offering prayers to the Lord.
7. Becoming the Lord’s servant.
8. Considering the Lord to be one’s best friend.
9. Surrendering everything to the Lord, i.e., serving Him with body, mind and speech.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu has given precedence to five items for the development of bhakti. They are as follows:

1. Association with devotees.
2. Engagement in the transcendental, loving service of the Lord.
3. Hearing and understanding of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam.
4. Chanting of the holy name of the Lord.
5. Residence in a holy place like Vṛndāvana or Mathurā.

He nonetheless acknowledges nāma-saṅkīrtana, or repeated chanting of the holy name of the Lord as the best method. In Kali- yuga, there is no alternative to nāma-saṅkīrtana:

harer nāma harer nāma harer nāmaiva kevalam

kalau nāsty eva nāsty eva nāsty eva gatiḥ anyathā

(Bṛhad-nāradya Purāṇa)

“In the age of Kali, there is no other way, no other way, no other way (for spiritual progress) than the chanting of the holy name, the chanting of the holy name, the chanting of the holy name.”

kṛte yad dhyāyato viṣṇum tretāyām yajato makhaiḥ dvāpare paricaryāyām kalau tad dhari-kīrtanāt

(Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 12.3.52)

“In Satya-yuga, the prescribed method of liberation was dhyāna (the performance of meditation and austerities). In Tretā-yuga, it was yajña (the performance of sacrifices) and in Dvāpara-yuga it was paricarya (the process of service and care of the temple deities). In the present age of Kali-yuga, the path is that of chanting the holy name of Śrī Hari.”

In Satya-yuga, the quality of truthfulness (satya) predominated in the consciousness of human society. Possessing a very high level of understanding, man could easily realise the temporary nature of the world of matter. Thus, it was easy for the people of that era to renounce the mundane world with an attitude of natural aversion. Therefore, attraction toward material sense objects could not divert their attention. They would immerse themselves in meditation upon the transcendental form of the Supreme Lord.

In Tretā-yuga, attraction toward material sense objects gained a stronger hold. Thus, mankind offered the material sense objects themselves to the Supreme Lord, Śrī Viṣṇu (Kṛṣṇa) through the performance of elaborate sacrifices. The mind follows the senses to the objects of attraction. Therefore, by offering these objects to Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the mind was made to follow and ultimately reach His lotus feet.

In Dvāpara-yuga, materialistic tendencies became even stronger and the material senses became ever more powerful and dominating. Due to these naturally deteriorating conditions, it was no longer possible for the ordinary man to participate in opulent sacrifices. Now the senses could easily become enmeshed in a multitude of distractions, resulting in the necessity of yet another process to turn them toward the service of Śrī Bhagavān. Thus, in Dvāpara-yuga, the emphasis was given to pūjā and rituals, with the aim of focusing the senses upon one central point—the Supreme Lord.

In Kali-yuga (the present age), however, materialism is rampant, knowing no bounds. The mind is flickering, restless, untamed, sick and perverse. A restless mind cannot meditate; an untamed mind is incapable of the performance of sacrifices and a sick, perverted mind is unfit for pūjā and worship. A diseased person cannot serve properly. Therefore, in Kali-yuga, the only panacea for material misery is nāma-saṅkīrtana, the chanting of the holy names of Śrī Hari. This is the medicine that Śrī Bhagavān has prescribed for the serious ailments of the Age of Kali.

Offences to the Holy Name

There are people whose minds are unsteady, who have not controlled the senses and whose hearts are filled with desire for sense objects. At the same time, they are desirous of worshipping the Supreme Lord. What are such people to do?

Many such people approach me with the complaint that although they have performed much harināma, they are still unable to develop affection, attachment or love for Śrī Bhagavān, and neither has their taste for the Holy Names increased. I would like to tell such people that simply uttering the words Rāma or Govinda is not equivalent to the Name of the Supreme Lord. With our mouths we chant the Holy Names, but within our minds, we harbour a desire to acquire all the sense objects of the material world. Even after chanting like this for millions of births, one will be unable to attain Śrī Bhagavān or develop love for Him. However, one can acquire pious merit or some non-eternal benefits of this world. In the Padma Purāṇa, Jagad-guru Śrīla Vedavyāsa has described in great detail the offences that can be committed while chanting the Holy Name of the Lord. The chanting that is performed without offence is known as the Pure Name. Even a single utterance of the Pure Name can bring about transformations of Divine Love in the living entity.

There are ten offences to the Holy Name. Every devotee must be careful to avoid these ten offences. Those who complain that they are unable to progress even though they are chanting the Holy Names are often not aware of the ten offences, which are as follows:

*satām nindā nāmnah paramam aparādhām vitanute yataḥ khyātim yātam
katham u sahate tad-vigarhām*

(1) **To blaspheme the devotees:** This is one of the greatest dangers in the realm of devotion. Denigrating someone before others or creating a wrong

impression about them is known as nindā, or offence. Suppose someone named Rāma has stolen a banana and eaten it. Later on, if somebody asks about that missing banana, we would answer that Rāma has eaten the banana. This answer is correct, but if I reply in such a manner that someone forms the wrong impression about Rāma, then that would be termed as an offence. This is a sin.

If one blasphemes those devotees who have great affection for Śrī Bhagavān, who are engaged in propagating the Holy Names and glories of the Lord, then this is a grave offence to the lotus feet of Śrī Harināma Prabhu (the Holy Name Personified). For example, if somebody verbally abuses my son or wife, he will never get my mercy. Similarly, if one blasphemes those saintly devotees or Vaiṣṇavas who are engaged in propagating the Holy Names and glories of Śrī Bhagavān, one will never receive the grace of Śrī Bhagavān even upon chanting His Name.

śivasya śrī-viṣṇor ya iha guṇa-nāmādi-sakalaṁ dhiyā bhinnam paśyet sa khalu hari-nāmāhita-karaḥ

(2) To distinguish between the all-auspicious Lord Viṣṇu and His Name, Form, and the like:

In this material world, an object and its name are not equivalent to each other. If we then conclude that the Name or Form of the Supreme Lord is different from the Lord Himself, then we commit an offence to the Lotus Feet of Harināma Prabhu. Those devotees who cannot understand with their intelligence that the transcendental Name, Form, Attributes and Pastimes of the Supreme Lord are non-different from the Lord Himself, and who thus distinguish between Śrī Bhagavān and His Name, Form, Attributes and Pastimes are hindered in their devotional progress.

Apart from this, it is also an offence to consider demigods such as Lord Śiva to be independent of, or separate from, Lord Hari. In some places in the scriptures, Lord Śiva is mentioned as being non-different from Lord Viṣṇu. However, we must understand the deeper meaning of this. In reality, Lord Śiva is very dear to Lord Viṣṇu and is therefore described as being non-different from Viṣṇu. Similarly, in a few places the spiritual master and Śrī Bhagavān are described as

being one. Again, the meaning of this scriptural statement is that the spiritual master is very dear to Śrī Bhagavān. This is the reason why we do not offer tulasī leaves to the lotus feet of Lord Śiva or the spiritual master. It would be a grave offence to do so. However, we do offer tulasī leaves to the Lotus Feet of Bhagavān Viṣṇu.

Nowadays some so-called spiritual masters arrange for themselves to be worshipped by their disciples and even have tulasī leaves offered at their feet. Such so-called spiritual masters are the greatest offenders. By engaging in these acts, their unfortunate disciples are also creating a place for themselves in hell. It is my humble prayer to the disciples of such bogus spiritual masters that they study the holy scriptures. If one has never read the scriptures, then one must inquire into this matter from someone well-versed in the scriptures. In conclusion, the second offence to the Holy Name is to think that the Holy Name of the Supreme Lord is different from the Lord Himself and that demigods such as Lord Śiva are independent of the Supreme Lord.

guror avajñā

(3) **To disobey the spiritual master:** It is an offence to disobey the initiating or instructing spiritual masters, or to consider them to be ordinary human beings. “I am a human being. My spiritual master is also a human being—he is just more intelligent than me.” Such a belief is an offence at the feet of the spiritual master. The reality is that the spiritual master is that form of the Supreme Lord in which the Lord manifests Himself before us and instructs us how to serve Him. The spiritual master accepts the purport of all the scriptures, acts accordingly and teaches others to do the same. One should think, “Kṛṣṇa is bestowing His mercy upon me in the form of my spiritual master.” On giving the matter due consideration, we will come to understand that the original spiritual master is Śrīmatī Rādhikā. When Lord Kṛṣṇa was present on the earth, only the devotees were able to recognise Him. Others, out of their foolishness, took Him to be an ordinary human being.

avajānanti mām mūḍhā mānuṣīm tanum āśritam param bhāvam ajānanto mama

bhūta-maheśvaram

(Bhagavad-gītā 9.11)

Foolish people do not understand the Form of the Supreme Lord characterised by All-Existence, All-Knowledge and All-Bliss, or the infinite transcendental qualities of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, the spiritual master is not an ordinary human being. He is the grace incarnate form of the Supreme Lord and is a manifestation non- different from the Lord. Considering the spiritual master to be an ordinary human being and disobeying him is the third offence to the Holy Name.

śruti-śāstra-nindanam

(4) **To blaspheme the holy scriptures:** If we blaspheme the scriptures such as the Vedas that reveal the greatness of the Holy Name, then we will not receive the grace of Harināma Prabhu. If one chants the Holy Names but disobeys or blasphemes the scriptures, then one will never be able to achieve the mercy of the Holy Name.

tathārtha-vādaḥ

(5) **To consider the glories of the Holy Name to be an exaggeration:**

Arthavāda means to glorify in excess of what is actually true, or to exaggerate the importance of a thing. In one place in the Bṛhad- viṣṇu Purāṇa, it is said:

*nāmno hi yāvatī śaktiḥ pāpa-nirharaṇe hareḥ tāvat kartuṁ na śaknoti pātakam
pātakī naraḥ*

“Lord Hari’s Name is invested with infinite potency to relieve us of our sins. What to speak of ordinary human beings, even the most sinful person is incapable of committing more sins than the Holy Name can eradicate.” Upon reading or hearing this statement, if one thinks that the scriptures glorify the Holy Name only to increase our faith, and that the Holy Name is not really that potent, then one commits an offence to the Holy Name.

hari-nāmnī kalpanam

(6) **To consider the Holy Name to be imaginary:** Some people consider the Holy Name to be imaginary. They think that the Supreme Lord has no form or attributes. They say, “One may chant ‘dog,’ ‘cat,’ ‘stone,’ or ‘Hari’—they are all meant to focus the mind.” The Holy Name uttered with such a mentality is not the Pure Name but an offence to the Holy Name. Apart from this, if one has no faith in the greatness of the Holy Name but still chants, then this is not the Pure Name but an offence to the Holy Name.

nāmno balād yasya hi pāpa-buddhir na vidyate tasya yamair hi śuddhiḥ

(7) **To commit sin on the strength of the Holy Name:** Even a single utterance of the Holy Name can wash away all of one’s sins. If one then thinks that one will commit sins all day long and chant the Holy Name only once at night, by which all of one’s sins will be washed away, then such chanting is also an offence to the Holy Name. It is also an offence to chant the Holy Name for the fulfilment of our material desires—this is not devotion. For example, if a young boy joins his hands together and humbly requests his father, “Dear father, please bring a bucket of water and wash my feet,” then this is not devotion to the father. Similarly, the Holy Name uttered for the fulfilment of one’s material desires is certainly not one of the limbs of devotional service, but rather, an offence. Therefore, one must chant the Holy Name of Śrī Bhagavān not to fulfil

one's desires but for the sole pleasure of Bhagavān.

dharma-vrata-tyāga-hutādi-sarva- śubha-kriyā-sāmyam api pramādaḥ

(8) **To equate the Holy Names with auspicious ritualistic activities:** If one thinks that chanting the Holy Name, performing a fire sacrifice, observing a vow, etcetera, are all the same, then one commits an offence to the Holy Name. The Holy Name of Śrī Bhagavān is directly Bhagavān Himself. What to speak of anything greater than Him, there is nothing even equal to Śrī Bhagavān and His Name.

Pramāda means to chant the Holy Name while thinking of something else. In other words, the hand is fingering the beads, the mouth is chanting the Holy Names, but the mind is thinking of material subjects—this is known as inattentive chanting. Such chanting can lead to pious merit but not devotion. Neither will it help us in achieving the grace of Śrī Bhagavān.

aśraddadhāne vimukhe 'py aśṛṇvati yaś copadeśaḥ śiva-nāmāparādhah

(9) **To instruct a faithless person about the Holy Name:** Among all the instructions in the Vedas, the instructions pertaining to the Holy Name are foremost. However, only those who have faith in Śrī Bhagavān are eligible to understand such instructions. If one instructs those who do not have undivided faith in Śrī Bhagavān, who do not have any interest in serving Him or hearing about Him, then one commits an offence to the Holy Name. That is why pure devotees (uttama-bhaktas) first generate faith for the Holy Name in the hearts of such people and then instruct them in the Holy Name. Intermediate devotees (madhyama-bhaktas) should ignore those who are envious of Śrī Bhagavān and the Vaiṣṇavas.

*śrute 'pi nāma-māhātmye yaḥ prīti-rahito naraḥ ahaṁ-mamādi-paramo nāmnī
so 'py aparādha-kṛt*

(10) To have no appreciation for chanting the Holy Name: If, in spite of hearing about the wonderful glories of the Holy Name, one maintains one's conception of "I" and "mine" in this body of blood, flesh and skin, and in material sense objects, showing no interest or persistence in chanting the Holy Name, then one is also an offender to the Holy Name.

In this way, only those who chant the Holy Name avoiding these ten offences are able to attain the fifth goal of life—pure love for Kṛṣṇa. The Lord of our lives, Śrī Gaurāṅga Mahāprabhu, appeared on this earth to spread this Pure Name of Kṛṣṇa. He taught that there is no other method for the ultimate benefit of the living entity than chanting the Holy Name of Kṛṣṇa. By performing prāṇāyāma and other yogic processes one can temporarily suppress one's desires but there is very little chance of getting permanent benefit. Following yogic processes may even cause a hindrance in the practise of developing pure love of Godhead. Therefore, if those whose minds are unsteady, who have not controlled the senses and whose hearts are filled with desire for sense objects, hear about the scriptures from the mouths of pure devotees and chant the Holy Name without duplicity, then they will gradually be able to taste the nectar of the Śrī Bhagavān's Name. By this, they will become indifferent to the non-eternal sense objects, and their unsteadiness of mind and desire for sense enjoyment will cease.

The principal limbs of devotional service

We are neither politicians nor social workers; neither are we economists. We have dedicated our lives to the attainment of the supreme goal of life, and we have no doubts about our decision. We have firm faith that one cannot be happy without worshipping the Supreme Lord—it is as sure as death. It is foolishness

to think that any living entity can be happy without serving the Supreme Lord, who is the very form of transcendental bliss. We do not oppose those who claim that they will become happy without worshipping the Supreme Lord, although we would like to see how they can attain that happiness and bliss. In actuality, intelligent human beings are born only to engage in the worship of the Supreme Lord.

In the 2nd Canto of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, there are stories of conditioned souls attached to wife, son, wealth, etc., increasing their bondage to the illusory energy, māyā. However, out of such persons, those who want to be free of this bondage of māyā should hear, chant and remember the transcendental pastimes and qualities of Supreme Lord Śrī Hari, as the essence of all the regulations and prohibitions in the scriptures is to always remember Kṛṣṇa and never forget Him. In Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, explaining the subject matter of abhidheya (devotional practise), tells Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī, “There are many limbs of regulated devotional service (sādhana-bhakti). I shall explain the essence of all of them to you.” Śrīman Mahāprabhu said that the foremost limb of bhakti is to take shelter of the lotus feet of the spiritual master. In order, after that comes kṛṣṇa-dīkṣā-śikṣā (receiving initiation and instruction about Kṛṣṇa), serving the spiritual master and so on. We will briefly discuss these limbs of bhakti here:

(1) **Taking shelter of the lotus feet of the spiritual master:** One gets an opportunity to associate with sādhus (pure devotees of the Lord) after performing numerous pious deeds over countless births. As one hears Hari-kathā from the lips of sādhus, one develops firm faith in Śrī Hari. At that time, one becomes qualified to practise ananya-bhakti (unalloyed devotional service) to the Supreme Lord and in order to learn about bhakti, takes shelter of the lotus feet of the bona fide spiritual master. One learns about pure devotion from one’s spiritual master after taking shelter of him or, in other words, after becoming his student.

(2) **Taking initiation (dīkṣā):** Dīkṣā means receiving transcendental knowledge. This knowledge is self-evident, perfect knowledge.

(3) **Serving one's spiritual master with faith:** Do not consider the spiritual master to be an ordinary human being like yourself. Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself descends into this universe as the spiritual master in order to teach us how to serve Him. Thus the scriptures refer to the spiritual master as the representative of all the demigods. You should consider him to be your most affectionate guardian and never disobey his instructions.

(4) **Inquiring about sad-dharma:** One should learn from one's spiritual master about sad-dharma or the true religion of the soul. If one does not understand something then one should humbly inquire about it.

(5) **Following the path laid down by sādhus:** One should follow the path laid down by sādhus. Do not follow the conditioned souls of this world. The sādḥaka must lead his life in the same way that the great devotees live their lives.

(6) **Renouncing all sense enjoyment for Kṛṣṇa's satisfaction:** One should renounce all objects of sense enjoyment for the satisfaction of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, our object of worship. One should renounce anything that cannot be offered to the Supreme Lord or that the Supreme Lord does not like. Those who desire their actual benefit should refrain from gambling and other vices. You can see the result of gambling in Mahābhārata, wherein the Lord has instructed us, through the medium of His friend Yudhiṣṭhira, about how a person can be deprived of his strength, fame, wealth, etc., by indulging in gambling. Secondly, one should give up alcohol, opium, cannabis, cigarettes and other intoxicants. Thirdly, one must completely refrain from illicit sex. One should not look at women lustfully other than one's own wife. Fourthly, the sādḥaka who desires his own well-being should not commit violence to any living beings. Some sādḥakas desire to worship the Supreme Lord, but at the same time, consume fish, eggs, meat and other dirty things. Such people must completely give up eating all such substances. You may not listen to us but at least give up all of these for the satisfaction of your object of worship.

(7) **Residing at the holy dhāma:** Although the Supreme Lord is everywhere, one should still reside at places where the Lord had His pastimes (such as Vṛndāvana, Navadvīpa, Jagannātha Purī, etc.), where the Lord's deity is eternally served and worshipped, or where the Lord's devotees live.

(8) **Accepting only as much material facility as is required to sustain one's life:** Householder devotees should earn and accumulate only as many material things as are required for their household life. They should not be so entangled in material affairs that they have no time for bhajana. If you are always hankering after material things, then you will not be able to engage in bhajana. However, if you earn less than your requirements, then the demands of your family will not be met; your child will ask for something or your wife will trouble you for some household items. These troubles will disturb you and you will not be able to perform bhajana. Thus, one should accept only those material things that are a bare necessity for one's life. This means that one should not earn more or less than one's needs.

(9) **Fasting on Ekādaśī:** This tithi (lunar day) is also known as Hari-vāsara, Hari-priyā or Viṣṇu-priyā. Those who desire their actual benefit should definitely observe this day of upavāsa (fasting). 'Upa' means 'near' and 'vāsa' means 'residing'. So the meaning of 'upavāsa' is 'residing near the Supreme Lord'. On this day one should refrain from all kinds of sinful activities and with all good qualities, worship the Supreme Lord. The Supreme Lord is very pleased by observance of this Viṣṇu-priyā-tithi. That is why devotees of all Vaiṣṇava sampradāyas observe this tithi with great respect.

(10) **Worshipping Vaiṣṇavas, brāhmaṇas, cows, tulasī and āmlā trees:** The sādḥaka should honour and worship Vaiṣṇavas, brāhmaṇas, cows, tulasī (holy basil), āmlā (gooseberry) and pīpala (banyan) trees. It is mentioned in Skanda Purāṇa that by remembering them and offering respects to them, all of one's sins are washed away:

*aśvattha-tulasī-dhātrī- go-bhūmi-sura-vaiṣṇavāḥ pūjitāḥ praṇatā dhyātāḥ
kṣapayanti nṛṇām agham*

(Skanda Purāṇa)

(11) Avoiding offences against devotional service and the holy name: Sādhakas desiring Hari-bhakti should pay particular attention to the ten offences against the holy name and the thirty- two offences against devotional service. One will not progress if one engages in bhajana while committing offences.

(12) Abandoning the association of non-devotees: There are those who do not believe in the Supreme Lord or accept Lord Viṣṇu as their object of worship. They do not believe in His existence, and claim that the Absolute Truth is formless or attributeless. There are others who are attached to material or sensual enjoyment—all of these are non-devotees. If you want to progress in bhajana, then you should give up their association.

(13) Not accepting many disciples: If you accept many disciples then you will not have time to instruct or reform them all. Thus, do not accept many disciples.

(14) Refraining from reading and reciting many books, and making novel interpretations of scripture: Many people are accustomed to reading any and all literature that they come across. They begin reading one book but do not finish it before beginning another, and another, and so on. In this way, they read many books—but only partially. Because of this, they are unable to understand the purport of the scriptures and stray away from the supreme goal of life. One should also refrain from explaining too many scriptures.

(15) Remaining equipoised in loss or gain: One should not become unbalanced either in loss or gain. Otherwise, your attention will become diverted and your

bhajana will be obstructed.

(16) **Not being overwhelmed by emotions such as lamentation:** You should not grieve excessively if someone in your home or a relative of yours dies. One who has come into this world is sure to leave. One who is born is sure to die:

*jātasya hi dhruvo mṛtyur dhruvaṁ janma mṛtasya ca tasmād aparihārye ’rthe
na tvaṁ śocitum arhasi*

(Bhagavad-gītā 2.27)

(17) **Not criticising the demigods or other scriptures:** Worship the Supreme Lord but do not criticise the demigods or other scriptures. Worship of Śrī Kṛṣṇa does not mean that you can speak foul of Indra, Durgā, Śiva, Brahmā, etc. Of course, all demigods are not equal but it is not right to speak badly about them. One should respect them all according to their respective statuses. Understanding all demigods to be servitors of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and offering them respect, one should engage in remembering Śrī Kṛṣṇa, one’s own worshipable deity. A living being will worship a demigod of the same mode of nature (goodness, passion or ignorance) which he possesses himself. He will have as much faith and one-pointedness in that deity as per his degree of eligibility. Thus, one should not manifest any kind of disrespect in relation to such a person’s object of worship. By the mercy of those demigods, as such persons progress in their worship, their hearts will eventually become nirguṇa (free of all material qualities) and they will also begin the unalloyed devotional service of nirguṇa Śrī Hari.

Similarly, one should not criticise other scriptures. Although the study of devotional scriptures is our only path to success, those who are fruitive workers (karmīs) and who have eligibility for karma (fruitive work) will only study the scriptures related to karma while others who are seekers of knowledge (jñānīs) and who have eligibility for jñāna (knowledge) will only study those scriptures that pertain to jñāna. Similarly, those who are yogīs will study the scriptures

related to yoga. However, those who desire pure devotion to the Supreme Lord should study only the authentic devotional scriptures and refrain from criticising any other scripture.

(18) Not listening to blasphemy of Viṣṇu or the Vaiṣṇavas: One should never hear any critical words spoken about Lord Viṣṇu or Vaiṣṇavas. If someone is speaking in this way before you, then you should not quarrel with them but quietly leave that place. Uttering or listening to such blasphemy is a great offence and will certainly lead to the downfall of the sādhaka.

(19) Not listening to mundane talks: One should not listen to the anti-devotional talks of this world, particularly discussions relating to the affairs between men and women, etc. Such discussions are detrimental to one's devotional progress.

(20) Not disturbing any living being with one's deeds, mind or words: One should not trouble any living being with one's body, mind or words.

While describing the limbs of sādhana-bhakti, Śrīmān Mahāprabhu explained that the sādhaka should hear about the name, form, qualities and pastimes of the Supreme Lord from the lips of a pure devotee or spiritual master. After that, he should repeat whatever he has heard to others and, thus, remember the Supreme Lord. One should worship and offer prayers to the Lord, and serve the Lord thinking oneself to be His servant (dāsa-bhāva) or His friend (sakhyā-bhāva). Your wealth, body, mind, senses and you yourself (the jīvātmā) all belong to the Supreme Lord. Therefore, all these things should be offered unto the lotus feet of the Lord. One should sing and dance before the Lord for His pleasure. One should humbly reveal one's innermost feelings before the Lord. One should pay prostrated obeisances (daṇḍavat-praṇāmas) to the Lord. One should get up to welcome the spiritual master or the deity of the Supreme Lord when They come before you. Whenever the deity, spiritual master or an exalted devotee leaves, one should go after Them for some distance. One should visit the holy places of

the Supreme Lord. One should circumambulate the deity, Girirāja Govardhana, etc. One should recite hymns for the pleasure of the Lord. One should chant the holy names and mantras of the Supreme Lord and, together with other devotees, perform congregational chanting of the Lord’s name, qualities, pastimes, etc. One should accept the Lord’s remnants such as incense, garlands, sandal paste, etc. and honor the Lord’s prasāda. One should have darśana of the āratīs and festivals of the Lord. One should have darśana of the deity with devotion. One should offer to the Supreme Lord, the spiritual master, the sādhu or the brāhmaṇa, things that are useful for the service of Śrī Kṛṣṇa or that are very dear to one’s self. One should serve tulasī, the Vaiṣṇava, the dhāma (holy place) and the bhāgavata (book Bhāgavata and devotee bhāgavata). One should perform whatever activities are pleasing to the Lord. One should always anticipate the Lord’s mercy. In addition, one should celebrate Janmāṣṭamī and other festivals, in the company of devotees, surrender unconditionally unto the Lord with one’s mind, words and body, and observe Kārttika-vrata, etc. Altogether, these make up the sixty-four limbs of sādhana-bhakti.

After explaining all of this to Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī, Śrīmān Mahāprabhu said that of the sixty-four limbs of devotional service, sādhu-saṅga (the association of devotees), nāma-saṅkīrtana (congregational chanting of the holy names), bhāgavata-śravaṇa (listening to Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam), mathurā-vāsa (residing in Mathurā) and śrī-mūrtira śraddhāya sevana (serving the deity with faith) are the five topmost limbs. Observance of all five limbs or even a little measure of one of the five limbs will awaken Kṛṣṇa-prema—transcendental divine love for Kṛṣṇa—in the heart of the living entity:

sādhu-saṅga, nāma-kīrtana, bhāgavata-śravaṇa

mathurā-vāsa, śrī-mūrtira śraddhāya sevana

sakala-sādhana-śreṣṭha ei pañca aṅga

kṛṣṇa-prema janmāya ei pāñcera alpa saṅga

(Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 22.128-129)

Seeking the greatest

Knowledge is the cause underlying all substance. The cit-śakti and acit-śakti are natural and contrasting manifestations of one undivided knowledge. So it can be said that at the basis of all things lies undivided knowledge, understood as Brahman, Paramātmā and Bhagavān. In knowledge, there is no room for ignorance and hence there is no blemish found in Brahman, Paramātmā or Bhagavān. However, in some of Śrī Bhagavān's manifestations, apparent faults are observed by the senses of those who do not possess the appropriate qualification. There is no defect or blemish in cit-śakti, but one may temporarily find faults in the particles of cit-śakti that are overcome by designations. This state of ignorance arises from being averse to Śrī Bhagavān.

Śrī Bhagavān is All-Powerful; there is no one equal to Him or greater than Him (asamaurdhva). Unless He desires it, realisation or vision of Him is impossible. He is causeless and beginningless. Only a true unalloyed devotee, who is fully surrendered to Him, can realise and experience the reality of the Supreme Lord by His grace alone. Śrī Bhagavān manifests Himself in the form of Śrī Guru. So, Śrī Guru is the spiritual master of all and manifests the glories of the Supreme Lord. Therefore, Śrī Guru is referred to as the absolute counterpart of the Supreme Lord; as Śrī Bhagavān is complete in Himself (pūrṇa) and self-satisfied (ātmārāma), similarly, Śrī Guru is also pūrṇa and ātmārāma. Śrī Guru only has love and affection for the Paramātmā. His glory is to be engaged as a servitor or helper in the service for the pleasure of the Supreme Lord. He is the Lord's eternal servitor. Śrī Guru has no work other than the service of Śrī Bhagavān. His very existence is based on the eternal service of Śrī Bhagavān. This existence is practically manifested in two ways: (1) as service to Śrī Bhagavān; and (2) as grace bestowed on others, which is also a kind of service to Śrī Bhagavān. Except for devotion, no other trait resides in the heart of a true devotee. Śrī Guru enacts the role of the perfect devotee. A perfect devotee, Śrī Guru cannot be imperfect in any way because the root of all demerits is the desire for anything other than Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Śrī Guru engages all His senses in cultivating favourable devotion to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Therefore, Śrī Guru is the path. Those who follow Śrī Guru can earn the right to bhakti (devotion). One should not forget, however, that there are obstacles on this path. These consist of anyābhilāṣa (extraneous desires for things not related to bhakti), karma

(engaging in fruitive activity), and jñāna (cultivating impersonal knowledge). There are also the desire for bhukti (material enjoyment), mukti (liberation), and siddhi (mystic powers). These cause hindrance in following the heart of Śrī Guru or pure devotees. Beset with these unwanted desires, when the sādhaka is unsuccessful in achieving the desired result, he attempts to obtain a clean slate for himself by blaming other devotees or Śrī Guru Himself for his own faults, or claims that the original cause is at fault. In this manner, with the desire for name and fame, the hypocrite devotee engages in collecting offences at the lotus feet of Śrī Guru or pure devotees. If one does not take preventive measures to rectify these offences, they will gradually accumulate. First, there will be the tendency to disobey the Vaiṣṇavas and guru, and then the tendency to denigrate the guru, which will finally develop into hatred towards the Supreme Lord. Such a person will start criticising the Supreme Lord Himself. Thus, step by step, one will gradually develop the qualities of a materialist, and finally a demon (asura).

However, if we are able to see our own faults, then a path of rectification opens up before us. The third śloka of the Śikṣāṣṭaka prayers of Śrīman Mahāprabhu² becomes applicable to those who, after coming in contact with the saintly, cease running after wealth, women and adoration. Mending their ways, they turn to worthy, not worthless things. To be free from the clutches of the material ego one should increase one's transcendental, spiritual ego of being the servant of Viṣṇu and Vaiṣṇava. If the desire to serve Śrī Kṛṣṇa (to be His dāsa) is nourished, then the meaning of the phrase, “to be humbler than a blade of grass,” (tṛṇād api sunīcena) will be revealed very soon. Otherwise, many mundane desires will clash continuously, making the mind restless and agitated. There will be no peace. On the contrary, this restless lifestyle will disturb the harmony and balance of others as well. The desires of the mundane world lead to a kind of indigestion, setting off a chain reaction of suffering which captures all who are in the vicinity. There is no route of escape. The spiritual aspirant must be tolerant and patient like a tree (taror iva sahiṣṇunā). If one desires to become important, expecting honour from others for imagined virtues, he falls into a pit of despair and frustration when the reality of the situation turns out to be different from his desires. He becomes unable to rise above the circumstances and is obliged to remain in that dark state. If, however, one develops the ability to see his own defects and keeps his eyes fixed on the Greatest, then the petty ego will no longer cause interference. Like the amāni of Śrīman Mahāprabhu, that person will lead a balanced life of harmony and peace. If one realises the relationship (sambandha) of living being with Śrī Bhagavān, then the sheath of material ego slips away, and the opportunity arises to engage in hari-bhajana. Spontaneously

and naturally, humbleness and other qualities develop and one qualifies for complete surrender to Śrī Hari (śaraṇāgati).

Fuelled by the flames of lust and greed, persons who run after gross things consider themselves to be worshipable and are always restless for the service of those who can fuel their desires. However, the moment they are defeated in their material endeavours, they turn against their so-called mentors and unhesitatingly strike against these very same people. On the path of bhakti there is no such fear. This path, however, is only for those who are completely free from self-interest. Only one who has no material desire is able to acquire knowledge of and realise the vāstava-vastu, that which is real. Such a person does not see any faults in the original cause. Before finding fault in Śrī Bhagavān or the devotees, examine your own heart fully with a spirit of devotion, and you will know where the fault lies.

Notes

2 “One who is humbler than a blade of grass, more tolerant than a tree, and respects all without desiring respect for himself is qualified to chant the Holy Names incessantly.”

Public Addresses

The necessity of monasteries and temples

An essay originally penned in 1963; translated from Śrī Caitanya- vāñī, 7th year, Volume II.

To judge the usefulness of an object or person, it is first necessary to ascertain

that object or person's real identity. If we procrastinate or demonstrate indifference towards the object, then it becomes impossible to determine its merit. No definitive conclusion can be ascertained by judging the mere externals only. It is for this reason that the ancient seers analysed both the inner and outer forms of an object before disseminating logical advice regarding its necessity. Today, intellectuals and scientists abound, but their main concern is to see to the needs of only an immediate nature. They offer their advice with this in mind. Very few of this type of thinker present lasting solutions to problems, even after having made extensive, in-depth studies. The attention of the majority is focused on gaining profit, power and fame. Thus, they are noticeably silent when it comes to answers to major problems. Seeing that the gross majority will dance with joy as soon as they can grab something gross, those giving advice will accordingly cater to their appetites with that which is gross. Ordinary persons do not realise that the subtle is the cause behind the gross. The so-called learned, who are aware of this truth, praise other learned men and endeavour to secure prestige for themselves by emphasising the gross achievement of mankind. They thus attempt to satisfy their minds by receiving praise and recognition for their work. The net result is that the people at large are deprived of any lasting, long-term happiness.

The conscious entity can discern between what is required and what is dispensable, and can speak about pain and pleasure. Happiness and unhappiness, good and bad, are not applicable to that which is without consciousness and lacks feelings. Man possesses the highest degree of sensitivity in comparison to insects, worms, birds, beasts and all others that inhabit the earth, sky and water. Thus, we refer only to man, to the exclusion of all other living beings, when discussing the topic of needs and requirements. What do we really need? What, if acquired, would provide us with lasting happiness? Presently, efforts are being made by politicians, sociologists, economists and religious leaders representing countries across the globe to make man happy. The politicians prescribe various views such as monarchy, democracy, socialism and communism for world peace. Each view is backed by innumerable arguments. The economists vary in advocating capitalism, socialism or communism. Some sociologists want man to unite globally as one race, while others would like to see geographical units of social groups based upon heredity. Still others argue for a society categorised according to qualifications and work. The religious and moral guides flounder when it comes to the acceptance or denial of the existence of God. There are many divisions and subdivisions to be found within this maze of views.

It is difficult to understand those who deny the existence of God, and yet harp on about moral values. If the existence of God is rejected, then that which is gross and without consciousness becomes the primary cause. This is not supported by logic as has been analysed in the scriptures. The cause of any object or activity is consciousness. Therefore, one cannot accept any cause other than consciousness. The following verse explains this idea, agni- śaktye lauha yaiche karaye jāraṇa: (Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi- līlā 5.60) On its own, iron does not have the ability to burn, but after associating with fire, it too acquires this ability. Similarly, unconscious matter cannot engage in activity or even possess a sense of engaging in activity or work. The touch of consciousness makes it appear as if the unconscious matter were working. Thus, it must be admitted that whatever is active must have consciousness behind it.

At this point, it may well be asked, “Is the consciousness of the living being the primary cause? Is it the cause of all causes? Other than this consciousness, is there any other principal conscious entity?”

It can be said in answer, if this consciousness of the living being (jīva) is at the root of everything, then it should be full in its completeness, omniscience, omnipotence, and control over all. We can clearly see that the preceding attributes are absent in any of the living entities and thus, no particular jīva among the ordinary jīvas can be said to be the Principal Cause of everything. The living are different from the non-living due to the presence of consciousness. The opponents of this philosophy may now present a counter-argument by saying that because the jīva is endowed with consciousness, although not infinite, it must be a direct expansion (svāmśa) of the Infinite. The response to this is, if each jīva were a part of the infinite, then each individual would also be infinite. Since we observe that the ordinary living entities are not omnipotent, etc., then they must also not be infinite. All living beings are amśas (particles) of the prakṛti (potency) of Śrī Bhagavān. In some instances, Śrī Bhagavān and His potency manifest in a similar manner. On seeing a slight similarity between Bhagavān and His potency, men of small intelligence become bewildered. They mistakenly conclude that the jīva, a particle of the potency of Śrī Bhagavān, is equal to Śrī Bhagavān Himself, and thereby fall down. The Supreme Absolute Truth, Bhagavān Śrī Hari, is All-Existence, All-Knowledge and All-Bliss (saccidānanda). The prakṛti of all living beings is part of the prakṛti of Saccidānanda Śrī Bhagavān. The jīva is neither saccidānanda nor Śrī Bhagavān; he is relative in manifestation. Since the living beings are part of the prakṛti of Śrī Bhagavān, this relationship with Him never ceases, and hence the

difference between Śrī Bhagavān and the innumerable living entities is also eternal. Since cit, or consciousness, is distinct from acit (non-consciousness or matter), it is beyond the comprehension of the mind produced of matter. Thus, the sublime doctrine of acintya- bhedābheda (inconceivable simultaneous oneness and difference), based on the firm foundation of infallible logic and sound philosophy, is the only correct description of the relationship between God and the living entity. The cetana, or conscious living entity, manifests itself through thinking, feeling and willing. These are absent in that which is not conscious. Wherever the symptoms of thinking, feeling and willing are present, the existence of personality is to be admitted. Thus, the effectual consciousness (the jīva) and the Causal Consciousness (the Supreme Lord) both possess personality. In other words, Śrī Bhagavān Himself is not without personality. Due to our mundane, material conditioning, we have formed a conception of personality which is inherently limited. To impose this notion beyond the confines of prakṛti is ignorant and unreasonably whimsical. Directly or indirectly, the non-dual Supreme Absolute Truth, the Infinite Supreme Person—Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa—is the cause of all cit, acit and taṭasthā potencies as well as all causes and effects. Everything emanates from Him, everything is sustained by Him, and at the time of annihilation, everything is absorbed into Him. Thus, the welfare of all living beings is derived from Śrī Kṛṣṇa, is maintained by Him and is absorbed into Him. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the Cause of all causes. The pleasures of man are relative. Thus, by seeking the happiness of the Whole Who is Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the parts of the Whole also become happy and full of bliss.

If the politicians, economists, sociologists and moralists exclude Śrī Bhagavān or exhibit indifference towards Him, and formulate new laws or regulations for the so-called good of mankind, then the rules which they enunciate will not bring about lasting happiness. On the contrary, they will only bring about suffering, even though their methods and techniques may certainly be different. The general masses tend to imitate the example of the leaders. If the leaders exclude Śrī Bhagavān from their agenda of education and activity, then very rapidly, the ordinary folk will also adopt that policy, thinking it to be the current trend. Maddened with the pride of being the enjoyer, they will engage in fierce competition fuelled by desire and envy, thus doing harm to themselves. In this manner, all will be deprived of true, long-lasting peace and happiness.

Śrī Caitanyadeva made His appearance in a society torn apart by strife and conflict. Instead of attempting to tackle each petty knot, He brought everything under one umbrella. His own life setting the example, He inspired His

countrymen to focus all their theories and principles on that one centre, Śrī Bhagavān, and to do everything out of love for Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The masses may very well be ignorant of the main centre of one's life and of the glory of God. However, the seers of the Truth and truly learned persons who are aware of the real situation cannot disregard the discernment of the good as opposed to the bad, or demonstrate negligence toward the pangs of conscience. They cannot afford to cater to the base, vulgar and harmful passions, fuelling them, causing harm and damage to the masses. Rather, fulfilling their actual responsibility, they should lead the ignorant to a continuously evolving path which will nourish their real needs and which will never cease to bring the happiness of love for Śrī Bhagavān. In this way, such wise men will be performing the greatest act of mercy and friendship. Like the affectionate parents who discipline and direct the playful child toward his studies, displaying anger when they are actually thinking of the future welfare of the child, so too should the guardians of society see to the true welfare of the people and gradually wean them from the low and vulgar toward a co-operative form of welfare that includes all for all times.

The followers of Śrī Caitanya have realised that bhakti, or devotion to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, is the only reality that benefits all levels of mankind. Thus, they have endeavoured to their utmost to plant the roots of bhakti in society. The nectar of Śrī Caitanya's immortal love and compassion flowed through His spiritual brethren, Śrī Rūpa, Sanātana and the other Gosvāmīs, along with their three followers, Śrī Śrīnivāsa, Śrī Narottama and Śrī Śyāmānanda Prabhu. In this way, following the system of guru- paramparā (lineage of teachers and disciples), Śrī Caitanya's love also flowed through Rasika-mauli Śrī Viśvanātha Cakravartī, Vedānta-ācārya Śrī Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa, and later, through Śrī Gaura-śakti Śrīla Saccidānanda Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, Śrī Gaura-karuṇā-śakti Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Ṭhākura (who were empowered by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu) and others, it continued and is still ceaselessly continuing to flow.

Śrīla Sarasvatī Ṭhākura spread the message of Śrī Caitanyadeva not only in undivided India, but also throughout the entire world via the medium of his qualified disciples. During the course of this mission, he founded sixty-four maṭhas (monasteries) and temples, both in India and abroad, for the practice and propagation of kṛṣṇa- bhakti. After his disappearance from our midst, his disciples, in keeping with his wishes and with the welfare of mankind in mind, established hundreds of temples.

It is the company one keeps that propels one toward either the good or the bad.

Man's tendencies are given impetus by his friends and associates. There is no other shortcut to a change for the better other than seeking out the association of the sādhus (saints). That is why sages and ācāryas of ancient India dotted the landscape with aśramas, monasteries and temples. Here, the holy flame was kept alight. The seekers of truth had the opportunity to delve into the scriptures in the company of the saints, who were leading lives of austerity and discipline. They had the opportunity for achieving their eternal welfare by means of service to the Supreme Absolute Truth, Śrī Kṛṣṇa—the personification of all delightful mellows, and benefiting all people of the world.

All living beings strive for happiness, each according to his level and station. They enact many laws, earn money either honestly or dishonestly, undergo hardship to gain an education, and direct their attention toward the upliftment of society. Thus, it is natural to have an eager curiosity to know exactly what happiness might be. Does happiness possess a real existence of its own or is it a mere bundle of feelings that are triggered by vibrations of the material senses?

Devarṣi Nārada has stated, “The form of the ātmā is the form of happiness.” By using the word ātmā, both jīvātmā (the living entity) and Paramātmā (the Supersoul) are indicated. Śrī Bhagavān is the cause of the ātmā. Thus, the root of all happiness is Śrī Bhagavān. Śrī Bhagavān is non-dual knowledge. Ātmā, being the form of atomic happiness (aṇu-sukha-rūpa), seeks out the original all-pervading happiness (vibhu-sukha-svarūpa) of Śrī Bhagavān and savours it with joy. The atomic soul and the Universal soul are both persons. Thus, happiness has a personality. This personality is not mundane or temporal. It is transcendental and eternal. Being eternal, it cannot be perceived by the material senses. What we perceive on the temporal, earthly plane is but māyā, or the shadow of the eternal happiness. Those who desire genuine happiness know that the essence of happiness cannot be relished from an imitative reflection (the shadow world of māyā). Instead, they search for the transcendental personification of happiness and bliss—Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Their advice to us is to seek out Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is their sādhana (practice) and sādhya (goal); such are the members of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha. They know that the real welfare of all living beings rests at the feet of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Armed with this supreme knowledge, how could their behaviour be tainted by hypocrisy in any way? If it were otherwise, how would they be able to show the way to others? Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha follows the rules and teachings of Śrī Caitanyadeva, which are non-different

from those in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and those of the pāñcarātrika-mārga. Due to their proper understanding, they never offer advice contrary to these teachings, as doing so would lead one to a road long and uncertain. The life essence of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha is unalloyed devotion to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. If such maṭhas did not exist, then lesser mortals like us, striving and seeking material pleasures, would not have the opportunity to partake of the nectar flowing from Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

If reliable and dependable centres were not there for observing spiritual disciplines favourable to the realisation of Śrī Bhagavān, society would become ever more confused and lost in the complexities of religions centred on the material body, mind or other such illusory concepts. This fact can be illustrated by what happened during the first part of the independence movement in India. At that time, there was a dearth of indigenous, genuine khādi material (a type of cotton). Taking advantage of this, dishonest traders passed off Japanese imitation goods as Indian khādi, creating loss for the common people of the country. Similarly, if genuine spiritual centres, maṭhas or temples are absent, people will spend their valuable time and energy on adulterated organisations, falsely stamped with the name of Śrī Bhagavān. That is why there is an urgent need for setting up such temples of devotion to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. This is especially true today, at a time when man has sacrificed virtually all religiosity and values, become licentious, and has adopted a firm resolve to do harm to both himself and to the rest of society.

Those who take shelter of such a bonafide maṭha do not engage in futile endeavours of indulgence or renunciation. Rather, they can differentiate between what will please Śrī Bhagavān and what will not. They follow the path delineated by the scriptures and by those who are saintly. They are constantly alert to that which is to be rejected. The path of bhakti is more easily traversed by following such yukta-vairāgya. Leading a simple existence or having detachment towards wealth and property are, in and of themselves, insufficient to reach the final goal. Only the association of the bhakta (devotee) will bring about bhakti that will nourish and sustain the true seeker. The seeker of bhakti may hail from any class of society and be of any age or stage in life. By rising above such temporary identifications and entanglements associated with the bodily conception, and by keeping the company of śuddha- bhaktas (pure devotees), such seekers may gradually begin to savour love for Śrī Bhagavān. The association of the sādhu and one's highest prospect can only be achieved by means of sincere, unadulterated service.

The Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭhas are not only places for observing the disciplines of bhakti, but they also serve to spread and multiply bhakti. The maṭhas provide peace and shelter to those who are restless, who are wounded by the cruel whiplashes of the material body, mind and elements, who are suffering from the threefold miseries, and who are scorched by the fire of life in the material world. At the maṭha, there is happiness and bliss. Thus, the necessity of such spiritual institutions has been admitted to by all cultures since time immemorial. However, the very same maṭhas or temples will be the place of the bondage and downfall of those who, being aware of their real purpose, utilise them for their own enjoyment and sense gratification.

Confounded by the enchantment of wealth, comfort and power, the hypocrites who grab for themselves what is meant for the service of the Supreme Lord, who resort to deceit and falsehood in the name of Śrī Hari, are forever deprived of partaking of the real benefit of the maṭha. On the other hand, those who earnestly seek Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who serve Śrī Kṛṣṇa, can never come to any harm. Śrī Hari, with His deep love and compassion for the seekers and servitors, will always show them the right path and see to it that they can drink His divine nectar. If we stay away from maṭhas and temples because of the sly and the shrewd who sometimes misuse them, then only we miss out on the opportunity provided by these centres, because the monasteries and temples themselves are not actually affected in any way.

Today, the need for such spiritual centres is all the more urgent because, all over the world, man's greed and lust seems to know no bounds. Interest in the scriptures has reached an all-time low.

Values and morals are trampled underfoot. There is no respect for one another and an orgy of hatred and violence seems to have intoxicated the masses. These spiritual places will be the shelter for good people and the proper place for practicing the disciplines of pure devotion. My fervent prayer at the Feet of Śrī Gaurahari is that many such places of spiritual shelter may spring up, whether Hindu or not.

The Life and Teachings of Śrī Caitanya

The gist of Śrīla Gurudeva's discourse to American professors visiting the Hyderabad Maṭha on 3 July 1962.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu appeared on this earth in 1486 A. D. in Śrīdhāma Māyāpura, in the district of Nadia. From childhood, He came to be known as Nimāi Paṇḍita all over India due to His unparalleled scholarship (Nimāi meaning one born beneath the nīma tree, Paṇḍita meaning scholar). At the age of twenty-four, He took the vow of renunciation (sannyāsa) and proceeded to the holy city of Purī. From there He travelled for six years to various places of pilgrimage in both North and South India. During that time, He spread kṛṣṇa-bhakti in the hearts of all living beings— man, bird or beast—especially the most fallen. He was intent upon saving them from the grip of māyā. He then returned to Purī where He remained up to the time of His disappearance from this world. At Purī, He was constantly immersed in kṛṣṇa-prema and tasted the bhāva (transcendental mood) of Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī, together with His intimate devotee associates, Śrī Rāya Rāmānanda and Svarūpa Dāmodara. He terminated the visible display of His pastimes at the age of forty-eight.

Śrī Caitanyadeva has pointed out that the sole objective of our lives is to achieve love of God (kṛṣṇa-prema). Attachment to objects of an impermanent nature, with materialistic yearnings, is the root cause of our bondage and all sorrows. Eternal peace can never be attained by serving the ego and nourishing it with a supply of sensual objects. We can reach the shores of eternal peace only by turning the mind away from all that is perishable and instead, placing it at the Lotus Feet of Śrī Bhagavān, Who is the Form of All-Existence, All-Knowledge and All-Bliss (sac-cid-ānanda). Citing the evidences from the scriptures, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu negated the arguments for nirviśeṣa (impersonalism) and established saviśeṣa (personalism) to be the Ultimate Causal Reality. Because Śrī Bhagavān, possessing a transcendental Form, is devoid of mundane, distinctive features, He is sometimes referred to as nirviśeṣa. The very fact that Śrī Bhagavān cannot be qualified by mundane attributes or mundane distinctive features is His unique distinctiveness. Therefore, He is saviśeṣa. It would be foolish to equate the mundane, base features of the material world with those of Śrī Bhagavān's Pure, Transcendental, Spiritual Form. One need not be concerned that attributing variegatedness and personality to Śrī

Bhagavān will, in some way, negate the concept of God being Infinite. Without a doubt, the Divine Personality of Śrī Kṛṣṇa should be understood to be the very essence of Infinity and Eternal Existence. His potency knows no bounds, but it can be seen that there are three manifestations of that potency that are prominent: (1) the internal potency (antaraṅgā-śakti); (2) the external potency (bahiraṅgā-śakti); and (3) the marginal potency (taṭasthā-śakti). (The taṭasthā-śakti can be demonstrated by the analogy of trying to define the existence of the fine line at a river bank separating the water and the land.) All living beings are of the nature of the taṭasthā-śakti of the Lord. Having been granted minute independence by Him, they are therefore free to choose to live either under the umbrella of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's internal potency (the spiritual realm) or in the temporary material world, which constitutes Śrī Kṛṣṇa's external potency. Those who choose to turn away from Śrī Bhagavān, mesmerised by His external potency, begin to think of themselves as lord and master of all they survey. This is ignorance. The idea that the petty false ego is the one who does the enjoying inevitably leads to hatred, aggression and malice. Śrī Bhagavān is the only true Master and Enjoyer. All energies, including all living beings, are under His dominion. The jīvātmā (living entity) is an infinitesimal particle (amśa) of the potency of Śrī Bhagavān. It goes without saying that a part cannot be happy independently, having separated itself from the Whole. If attraction to material enjoyment persists and no attempt is made to turn toward Śrī Bhagavān, then neither the individual, nor the family, nor even society as a whole will ever attain true and lasting peace. Where there are many centres of interest, conflict becomes inevitable. If, however, love for Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa becomes the focal point for all, then immediately, all are seen as being related to each other. Then love and a sense of unity become spontaneous as a natural consequence. It can be seen that love for one's own family can easily lead to a clash with the family of another. If one's interest is pivoted to one particular locality, province or country, this will lead to disputes with other localities, provinces or countries. However, being in a relationship of love with Śrī Bhagavān, Who is the shelter of all, there will be no quarrel with anyone.

In the modern world, the powerful nations are engaged in the highly competitive production of nuclear weapons and the launching of satellites into space. The consequences of this could be disastrous. The founding of the whole world as a single powerful nation may solve these problems, but without offering worship to Śrī Bhagavān, everlasting peace which transcends the mundane plane will forever remain elusive and altogether impossible.

The relevance of religion

A lecture originally delivered in English by Śrīla Gurudeva at the Birla Academy of Art and Culture in October 1968.

A sincere attempt to explore an impartial and liberal approach to different views of religious faiths in this world is needed and we should try to find out how world fellowship of different religions or a unity of hearts among human beings can be promoted. There are two methods of approach: (1) the sincere, real and practical approach, relevant to the actual state of conditions and nature of human beings and (2) an idealistic approach having little or no practical value, merely indulging in the luxury of lofty- sounding words. If we sincerely want to obtain a real and abiding effect, we should face the facts boldly. The fact is that there are no two beings who are one hundred percent identical, as they are conscious units possessing independent thinking, feeling and willing. As a result of their different actions, individuals achieve separate environments and paraphernalia. Every individual has his peculiar nature distinct from any other. So, obviously individuals will vary in their opinions and tastes and this is quite natural. It is an unnatural thing to attempt to forcibly herd individuals into one fold, faith or particular ideology. Accordingly, the cultivation of tolerance of others' views is essential for world peace and unity. Indian sponsors of religion seem to have exhibited this sort of insight and tolerance; hence, many independent views have cropped up in India and have flourished simultaneously. Want of tolerance makes us sectarian and that spirit motivates us for the forcible conversion of others, which creates turmoil and unrest in the world. Religion should give equal scope to all individuals for their respective spiritual development according to their attributes. Indian saints have classified the nature of human beings into three broad groups—sāttvika, rājasika and tāmasika. Sāttvika people are wise, sincere, generous and non-violent. As such, they have an altruistic mentality and

render disinterested service. Rājasika people are egoists; however, they are active and do good to others with the motive of obtaining reciprocation for purposes of self-aggrandizement. They are unwilling to tolerate harm to themselves and have the spirit of taking revenge. Tāmasika people are indolent, out and out egoists and are of violent temperament. They are indiscriminate in their pursuit of enjoyment. They completely disregard the interest of others and will do anything to fulfill their selfish desires. So, sāttvika, rājasika and tāmasika people vary in their tastes, habits and nature.

Three forms of teaching religion have been prescribed for these three groups according to their eligibility, allowing them scope for gradual elevation. These three modes of teaching are related to the apparent self and, as such, are changeable. There are still higher thoughts of religious existence, which transcend these three qualities and relate to the eternal, natural function of the real self. If we want quantity, we must sacrifice quality and if we want quality, evidently we shall have to sacrifice quantity—both cannot be achieved at the same time. However, the primary point to be noted here is that there should be tolerance among sponsors of different religious views and respect for others' views, as well as equal scope given to all for their spiritual upliftment from their respective statuses. Another point to be noted here is that we should have the patience to understand the underlying spirit of different religious faiths and not merely indulge in disputes in regard to the ritualistic aspects of religions which will certainly vary in different parts of the world in accordance with the change of climatic conditions and environments.

Nowadays, we find lack of discipline rampant in every sphere of human life—political, social, economic, and even in education. Student unrest (youth unrest) is one of the most serious problems of the day. It is extremely difficult to proceed with constructive work when people are prone to indiscipline. To fight against disruptive tendencies and indiscipline, a radical treatment of the minds of the people is required. Here we feel the necessity of moral and spiritual values in human life. There are two ways of treating diseases—pathologically and symptomatically. In pathological treatment, the root cause of the disease is ascertained first and then the remedy is prescribed. The process of symptomatic treatment may be easier, but it does not have a lasting effect. It may give temporary relief, while treatment through the pathological process brings about permanent relief.

To determine the root cause of unrest, we ought first to determine the meaning of

self. I strongly believe that ignorance of our real self is the cause of unrest, discord and anxiety. The real self is not the physical tabernacle. It is something other than the gross and subtle bodies. We consider the body to be the person as long as we observe consciousness in it. The moment the body is bereft of consciousness, it loses its personality. I am 'I' when the conscious entity (i.e., the entity that thinks, feels and wills) is present in me and I am 'not-I' when it is absent in me. Hence, the entity whose presence and absence makes me 'me' and 'not-me' respectively must be the person. This conscious entity (the soul) is designated as 'ātmā' in Indian scriptures. Ātmā is indestructible; it has no origin and no end. If we plunge deep into the matter, we can trace our existence to the Absolute Conscious Principle, whom we call Godhead, the fountain source of innumerable conscious units. Godhead is termed 'sac-cid-ānanda', i.e., He is all-existence, all-knowledge and all-bliss. Individuals are points of rays emanating from Him and, as such, are units of His eternal and co-existing potencies. Individuals cannot live independently; they are all interconnected and co-existing though retaining their own individual characteristics.

It has already been stated that differences between individuals are unavoidable as they are conscious units. Now, the problem is to find a common ground and interest for the solution of these differences. A sense of common interest can be fostered among individuals if they know that they are interconnected, are parts of the one organic system and are the sons and daughters of the one father. Here is the task of all religions—to teach people that all beings of the worlds are closely interrelated. Although steadfastness or firm belief in God (niṣṭhā) according to some particular faith and eligibility of the individual is congenial for the healthy spiritual growth of every individual, it is also true that religious bigotry that begets enmity is condemnable, as it is against the real interest of the individual and society. Real religion teaches love for one another.

Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu propagated the cult of all-embracing divine love, which brings about universal brotherhood on a transcendental plane. According to Him, forgetfulness of our eternal relationship with the Supreme Godhead, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, is the root cause of all afflictions. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the God of all gods, the Supreme Person possessing all-existence, all-knowledge and all-bliss. He is beginningless, yet the beginning of all and the Primal Cause of all causes. The word 'Kṛṣṇa' means 'one who attracts all and pleases all by His wonderful enchanting beauty, majesty, munificence and supremacy'. This denotes the highest conception of Godhead with all perfections. He is the object of all love. Therefore, remembrance of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, or God, is the divine panacea for all evils.

The easiest and most effective way of remembering God is the chanting of His holy names, which can be practised by all, at any place or any time, irrespective of one's caste, creed, religion, age, health, or economic, social or educational status.

In Vedic culture, we find the theory of the cycle of time within infinite time, which has four stages in accordance with the predominance of religiousness or irreligiousness. The four ages are designated as Satya, Tretā, Dvāpara and Kali. In Satya-yuga (the first age of the cycle of time), wisdom predominated in men and, as such, they were aware of the painful and transitory nature of the world and were thereby not fascinated by it. Concentration without interruption was possible and meditation (dhyānam) was prescribed as the common religion suitable for all. In Tretā-yuga (the next spiritually degraded age of the cycle of time), when the spirit of activity predominated and people were attached to worldly objects, yajña (sacrifice, i.e., offering the Lord the objects of one's attachment) was prescribed as the common religion to divert the attention of people from material objects of attachment and to turn the mind toward Him. In Dvāpara-yuga (the next and still more degraded age), when people were addicted to worldly objects and sensualism, arcana (worship of deities) was prescribed as the common religion for gradual attainment of concentration of the mind by directing all the senses and objects of attachment to His service. In the present age of Kali-yuga (the last and most spiritually degraded age of the cycle of time), people are firmly attached to worldly objects, are too much given to sensualism and are always diseased, so they are incapable of performing dhyānam (meditation), yajña (sacrifice) or arcana (deity worship). Rightly and as such, the chanting of the holy names of God is prescribed for them.

Today the world is making tremendous scientific strides. Modern scientists are performing wonders. But in spite of their marvellous accomplishments and pride in twentieth century civilisation, it is puzzling to see that science is so much engaged in inventing destructive weapons such as atom bombs, etc., thereby threatening the continued existence of the whole human race. At any moment there may be a conflagration and the whole world may perish. Saints are deeply concerned as to how to avert such a calamity. Mere material scientific accomplishments are unable to save the world from such danger. Of course, scientific inventions or achievements as such are not condemnable. Everything depends on the proper use of things. Science may be used for the good of humanity and also may be misused for the destruction of human civilization. It is imperative to consider the problem and diagnose the disease of conflict and

mutual distrust among nations and individuals. So long as nations and individuals have separate centers of interest, tension is inevitable. No one can avoid it.

This world is limited. When there are many claimants for one limited object, disputes among these claimants are unavoidable. It is because of this that Indian saints differ from the leaders of the west or from the westernised leaders of our own country in their manner of tackling the problem of peace. In fact, genuine saints of the world are wise enough to see the fundamental defect in the attempt of the so-called best brains to achieve world peace. They assert with great emphasis that a practical solution of the problem is not possible so long as individuals do not change their present craving for sensuous enjoyment and greediness for mundane wealth, and direct their attention toward the Unlimited, the Infinite and the Absolute. The heads of different religious groups should clearly and emphatically point out and teach their followers the painful and perishable character of worldly objects and the futility of sensuous enjoyment. They should create interest in man for the worship of God, which brings about real happiness.

Unless and until the eternal relationship of people is known to them and they realize that they cannot exist or be happy without the Godhead, who is all-bliss, the natural inclination of people toward Him and diversion of their attention from the material aspects of life cannot be effected. As long as people do not have this realization, they will maintain the conviction that their only satisfaction lies in the realm of one's own gross and subtle senses. This is termed 'lust'. Hindrance to the fulfillment of lust breeds anger, and that in turn brings about conflict and malice among individuals and nations.

So long as people do not understand that they are inseparably connected, and until the activities of people are God-centered, mere sentimentalism or fictitious ideas will not be able to foster real love among individuals.

If we believe that our interest lies in material prosperity and sensuous enjoyment (lust), discord cannot be avoided. Want of patience and tolerance originates from lust. Even mere belief in the existence of God will be of great benefit to humanity by restraining them from committing sins and teaching man to do good to others. At least they will have fear of punishment for bad deeds and encouragement to seek rewards for good deeds. Any activity which leads to the infliction of harm to other animate beings is detrimental to our own interest and

will bring harm in return; we will not be encouraged to harm any individual, nay, even any sentient being of this world.

If we can love the Absolute Whole—the Godhead—we cannot have the impetus to injure any of His parts. So, according to the teachings of Lord Gaurāṅga, divine love is the best solution for all the problems of the world.

Non-violence and Love

Excerpted from lectures delivered between 1965-1966 in Calcutta; recorded in Śrī Caitanya Vāṇī, 6th year, Volume VII.

The terms “violence” and “love” only apply to living beings or those conscious entities (jīvas) that experience joy and sorrow. Criminal charges are not brought against those who dissect or cremate dead bodies. One who loves or who is an object of love, and one who commits violence or who is a victim of violence—both are conscious entities. In a universe teeming with life, man accounts for only a small percentage of the total number of living beings. When we speak of violence and love, we generally refer to man and not any other form of life. Since man holds the highest position among all living beings, it is not incorrect to put greater emphasis on thoughts dealing with the welfare of mankind. The hate and violence done to the more evolved creature is more harmful and dangerous than that done to the less evolved being. Thus, it is more sinful to commit violence to a more evolved being. A person who has ascended several steps is apt to fall more violently when pushed off a staircase than one who falls after having climbed only one step. Violence breeds more violence, with nothing of benefit to be gained. Those who do not want to invite violence should not commit violence. The Vedas sing, mā himsyāt sarvāṇi bhūtāni: “Do not harm any living being.” Modern science echoes this verse by stating, “To every action

there is an equal and opposite reaction.”

The reactions to the violence of a highly evolved creature will be of a proportionately higher order. The burden of sin becomes heavy if violence is directed toward those living beings that are benevolent and very useful, such as the cow and bull. Of course, it can be argued that without some sort of violence toward other living beings one could not exist, because life feeds on other life for survival:

ahastāni sahasānām apadāni catuṣ-padām phalgūni tatra mahatām jīvo jīvasya jīvanam

(Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.13.47)

“Those living beings that are without hands become food for those who have hands, such as man, and those that are without legs, such as trees and plants, become food for the four-legged; small living beings such as fish become food for larger living beings. In this way, one living being is food for another.”

Even vegetarians incur sin by eating plants which most certainly also possess life. However, since plants are not very highly developed and hence are less conscious of their environment, the strength of the sin incurred is less. One cannot escape sin even by living on air alone because one still unknowingly kills countless numbers of germs. Given the nature of the situation, is any escape route possible? In fact, in the Bhagavad-gītā (3.13), the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa has shown just such a path:

yajña-śiṣṭāśinaḥ santo mucyante sarva-kilbiṣaiḥ bhuñjate te tv agham pāpā ye pacanty ātma-kāraṇāt

“By taking only the remnants of yajña or sacrifices, the spiritually inclined are absolved of all sinful reactions. Those, however, who prepare foodstuffs

intended solely for their own satisfaction partake of sin and sin alone.”

Yajña vai viṣṇuriti śruteḥ: In the śruti-sāstra, Viṣṇu, the Absolute Truth, is described as Yajña (sacrifice), and one of His names is Yajña. Thus, one can become freed of all sins by partaking of viṣṇu-prasāda—foodstuffs that have first been offered to Viṣṇu as per the scriptural guidelines.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu has shown us a path that not only frees us from the sin of committing violence to other living beings, but also brings about their benefit. What exactly is violence? Violence is to attack the self-interest of a living entity. The real self-interest of the living entity is dependent upon identification of the true self of that living entity. The consciousness that manifests a particular identity, the absence of which causes the disappearance of that particular identity, is the true self. In the language of the scriptures, the true self is known as ātmā or soul. The ātmā is indestructible:

nainam chindanti śāstrāṇi nainam dahati pāvakaḥ na cainam kledayanty āpo na śoṣayati mārutaḥ acchedyo 'yam adāhyo 'yam akledyo 'śoṣya eva ca nityaḥ sarva-gataḥ sthāṇur acalo 'yam sanātanaḥ

(Bhagavad-gītā 2.23-24)

“The soul can never be cut to pieces by any weapon, nor burned by fire, nor moistened by water, nor withered by the wind. This individual soul is unbreakable and insoluble, and can be neither burned nor dried. He is everlasting, present everywhere, unchangeable, immovable and eternally the same.”

Although the living entity is conscious, it is not the cause of all consciousness, the Supreme Consciousness. The Supreme Consciousness does not depend upon anyone. On the contrary, all depend upon Him. The consciousness of each living entity is but a spark of that Supreme Consciousness and hence depends on Him. The existence of all living beings is dependent on Śrī Bhagavān, Who is the Cause of all causes; Śrī Bhagavān’s existence does not depend upon any other living being. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu defined the true nature of all living entities by saying:

jīvera ‘svarūpa’ haya—kṛṣṇera ‘nitya-dāsa’

kṛṣṇera ‘tatasthā-śakti’ ‘bhedābheda-prakāśa’

(Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 20.108)

“It is the living entity’s constitutional position to be an eternal servitor of Kṛṣṇa because he is the marginal energy of Kṛṣṇa and a manifestation simultaneously one with and different from the Lord.”

A living entity (jīva) is poised in the middle of two potencies of the Supreme Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa—His internal and external potencies. Thus situated, the jīva possesses the independence to interact with either one potency or the other. Although the jīva is a conscious entity, the minuteness of his atomic existence renders him prone to becoming overwhelmed by the external potency (māyā). When the jīva exercises his minute independence, he becomes easily enchanted upon seeing the external world of māyā. In this state, he begins to think of himself as the master and enjoyer of māyā. This is known as the material ego or jaḍa-abhimāna. Due to the jīva’s absorption in the material nature, certain feelings are developed. These are known as mana (mind), and the decisive faculty of the mind is known as buddhi or intellect. The trio of jaḍa-ahaṅkāra, buddhi and mana (false ego, intellect and mind) comprise the subtle body (sūkṣma- or liṅga-deha) of the jīva. The desires of this subtle body then gradually crystallise into the elements of the gross body.

The situation of the soul within the gross and subtle bodies can be illustrated by the following example. Suppose a person has acquired some property after having invested a lot of time and effort. Common sense tells us that he has not become the property, but that he is the proprietor of the property. It would not be intelligent to protect the property by harming the proprietor. In a similar manner, it is foolish to neglect the interest of the soul, only to direct one’s attention toward the pampering of the body and mind. The interest of the ātmā is the true interest of the jīva. Only things of equal nature can trade or interact with one another. If we analyse the gross body, we find that it is composed of five elements: earth, water, fire, air and space (the ethereal element). These same five elements nourish the body, and the body will eventually dissolve back into them.

In the same way, ātmā requires ātmā. The ātmā sustains and nourishes the ātmā, and the ātmā finally rests in the ātmā. That ātmā, which is required by all ātmās, which nourishes them all and which is the final destination for all, is the Paramātmā—the Supersoul.

yato vā imāni bhūtāni jāyante yena jātāni jīvanti

yat prayantyaabhisamviśanti tad vijijñāsasva tad eva brahma

(Taittirīya Upaniṣad 3.1.1)

“The Supreme Brahman is the origin and shelter of all living beings. When there is creation, He brings them forth from their original state, and at the time of annihilation, He devours them. After creation, everything rests in His omnipotence, and after annihilation, everything again returns to rest in Him.”

ātmā vā are draṣṭavyaḥ śrotavyo mantavyo nididhyāsitavyaḥ

(Bṛhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad 4.5.6)

“One should always see, hear about, think of, and meditate on the Supreme Absolute Truth.”

If the subtle and gross bodies are thwarted in their desires, subtle and gross forms of hatred and violence arise. One should understand, however, that the worst form of violence, and hence the greatest crime, is to frustrate and deny the true need of the ātmā.

Since one jīvātmā is not the cause of another jīvātmā, the pleasure of one does not lead to the happiness of the other; nourishing one does not lead to the satisfaction of the other. For example, one spark of light cannot sustain the glow of another, but all sparks can be nourished by stoking the flame of their source

lamp. Similarly, all living entities, or sparks of consciousness, have emanated from the One Supreme Consciousness. Without satisfying the Cause of all causes, Śrī Hari, nobody can be satisfied or nourished. By ignoring the roots and watering only the branches, leaves and flowers, can a tree stay alive? In like manner, “watering” or nourishing individuals or even groups of living beings will be in vain if Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa is excluded. This is the essential mantra of the Vedic teachings: dharma-mūlam hi hari-toṣaṇam, “The essence of dharma is the satisfaction of Śrī Hari.”

*prīyatām puṇḍarīkākṣam sarva yajñeśvara hari yasmin tuṣṭe jagat tuṣṭam prīṇite
prīṇitam jagat*

In Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, Prahlāda Mahārāja, being completely surrendered to the Lotus Feet of the Supreme Lord Viṣṇu, advocated the greatness of the ninefold path of devotion beginning with hearing the glories of Śrī Viṣṇu and chanting the Holy Names of Viṣṇu, for the pleasure of Lord Viṣṇu. The great sages of yore have also advised us to endeavour to please that Absolute Truth. Pure love (prema) is the love of the ātmā for the Supreme Being. He who is for the Whole is for all the parts of the Whole. That which attempts to hinder love for the Supreme Lord is known as violence. This violence acts against my interest as well as the interest of all. To love someone means to not harm him or his parts in even the slightest way. Thus, one who loves the Supreme Lord has genuine universal love, meaning he loves all living beings. In contrast to this, what some refer to as “universal love” turns out to be just another extended version of lust (kāma). The so-called “universal lovers” have, in fact, simply identified their own selfishness with the whole world. This may be understood as being merely an extended form of self-interest. They are ready to harm the rest of the world for the sake of their own selfish idea of the world.

The lover of Śrī Bhagavān, however, cannot nurse hatred for anyone under any circumstances. He has equal love for all, but his outward behaviour towards each person will differ, depending on the degree of manifestation of love for Śrī Bhagavān in each of these individuals. Violence and non-violence cannot be judged by external behaviour alone. If the father reprimands the son, it is not reasonable to jump to the conclusion that the father hates the son. It is the love of

the parent for the child that is the cause of the necessity for discipline. Not disciplining a child would, in fact, be harmful and hateful. The father has love and affection for all of his children, but he acts differently towards each of them according to their particular needs. The father may serve a tasty, rich meal to his healthy child, a gruel made of sago-barley to another, and a bitter extract of medicinal herbs to the child who has an upset stomach. The behaviour of the father differs from son to son, but his affection is the same for all of them. The power of digestion differs from one son to the other. They are served doses of paternal affection according to their individual capacities. Śrī Hanumānjī was a great devotee of Bhagavān Śrī Rāmacandra. His action of setting fire to Śrī Laṅkā, and thus of taking many lives, may apparently seem to be full of violence. Actually, however, there was not a trace of hatred and hence no real violence because Śrī Hanumān's actions were fuelled by love for Śrī Rāmacandra and nothing else. Ultimately, as a result, Śrī Hanumān's actions led to the true welfare of all. Without being done for the pleasure of Bhagavān Śrī Rāma, the wordly motives of wealth, women and fame would indeed have stained him with sin. The end justifies the means:

yasya nāhaṅkṛto bhāvo buddhir yasya na lipyate

hatvāpi sa imāṁ lokān na hanti na nibadhyate

(Bhagavad-gītā 18.17)

“One who has no false ego, whose intellect is not clouded by mundane, material works, may destroy the whole world and yet not cause any actual destruction, or be destroyed.”

Such a person has gone beyond the roles of the destroyer and the destroyed. In social customs, the killing of a human being is a ghastly sin. However, when this killing is done for a great or noble cause in warfare, the killer gets a reward and recognition for killing the enemy. On the other hand, when dealing with the world of petty self-interests, neither the victor nor the vanquished gains any benefit. What is achieved from the love of the Whole, or Śrī Bhagavān, is conducive to the welfare of the self as well as all others. Thus, it is only by means of bhagavad-prema (love for God) that real non-violence is possible. In ordinary parlance, non-violence indicates less violence, but in actuality, it is

impossible to have true non-violence by excluding love for Śrī Bhagavān.

International Peace

A lecture delivered by Śrīla Gurudeva at the Hyderabad Maṭha in August 1961.

The nations of the world, irrespective of race and religion, can only be truly united in love and harmony by following the path of prema-bhakti (love of God) as laid down by Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Divine Love (prema) is even greater than non-violence (ahimsā). To not harm others is a negative; that is to say, it means to refrain from doing something rather than doing it. On the other hand, love or prema is a positive action; it is the effort to do good to others. In reality, all talk about non-violence is in fact quite superficial, for in this life, none can exist without harming another. True non-violence is possible only when the self is totally surrendered to doing that which is for the welfare of all living beings. Since we are all infinitesimal parts of the One Supreme Entity, our true happiness lies in union, in the completion of the incomplete. If you water the roots of a tree, all the branches and leaves are automatically nourished. If you supply food to the stomach, your whole body is nourished. Similarly, if you serve and please Śrī Hari, everyone will become satisfied, for all are in Him and He is in all. Knowledge of Him is non-dual, for He is the One Omniscient and Eternal Reality.

*yathā taror mūla-niṣecanena tṛpyanti tat-skandha-bhujopaśākhāḥ prāṇopahārāc
ca yathendriyāṇāṁ tathaiva sarvārhaṇam acyutejyā*

(Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.31.14)

“As pouring water on the root of a tree energises the trunk, branches, twigs and other parts, and as supplying food to the stomach enlivens the senses and limbs of the body, simply worshipping the Supreme Personality of Godhead through devotional service automatically satisfies the demigods, who are parts of that Supreme Personality.”

Pure love, or prema-bhakti, is focused upon the indivisible Personality of the Supreme Lord, Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Who is One without a second. If an individual does not perceive that the totality and oneness of God is at the very centre of his existence, then it is inevitable that love for the body, family, society, province and country will clash with the body, family, society, province and country of others. If one draws many circles with their centres at different points on a page, then depending upon their proximity to one another, there is the possibility that their circumferences might cross and overlap. In this manner, if there are many self-centred sentient beings in the universe, then conflict becomes inevitable. If, on the other hand, the supremacy of that One Center (God) is recognised by all, leaving no room for a second, then the question of contradiction does not arise. If one loves the Whole, then one simultaneously loves all the parts of that Whole.

yasmin tuṣṭe jagat tuṣṭam prīṇite prīṇitam jagat

By satisfying Kṛṣṇa, the whole universe becomes satisfied, for one who is dear to Kṛṣṇa is dear to the whole universe.

However, that love which is not directed toward God should be understood to be only lust (the desire to exploit others). This is the underlying cause of envy and violence of all kinds, including war. According to Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu, Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Lord, while the living beings, the parts of His marginal potency, are eternal servitors of the Supreme Lord. Their relation with the Supreme Lord is of bhedābheda (simultaneous oneness and difference). Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself, by His unparalleled grace and exquisite beauty, attracts each and every individual to Him. Even His own avatāras (divine descents) are drawn to Him (Śrī Nandanandana Kṛṣṇa) and thus, Śrī Kṛṣṇa epitomises the very concept of love. By loving Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the lotus flower of

pure love will spontaneously blossom in the hearts of all living beings, and the path to that pure love for Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the present era of Kali- yuga is nāma- saṅkīrtana, constant chanting of the Holy Names of the Lord. Since all living beings have a right to His Name, nāma- saṅkīrtana will be the thread to bring the different nations of the world into oneness of prema, love for God.

Śrī Vyāsa Pūjā

Śrīla Gurudeva's Lecture On His Appearance Day

Śrīla Gurudeva gave the following lecture to his disciples in his evening class at the Calcutta Maṭha, 35 Satish Mukherjee Road, on 12 November 1967, the day of his appearance in this world.

Today, Utthāna-Ekādaśī, is also the tithi (lunar day) when we worship our predecessor ācārya Śrīmad Gaura Kīśora Dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja, for it is his disappearance day. You have heard a great deal about Bābājī Mahārāja's transcendental activities and teachings from the venerable Purī Mahārāja. As I utter his name, I beg for his blessings, and I also pray for the blessings of my guru mahārāja, who is non-different from him.

Coincidentally, this also happens to be my own birthday. Those who love me have taken this opportunity to give me their profuse blessings. Who is such a fool that he will not accept blessings when they are given? Who will not take the opportunity to make spiritual advancement when it comes? I therefore humbly accept all of your blessings. May every one of my senses be constantly engaged in the service of Kṛṣṇa and His devotees by your mercy.

It is the custom for those in the renounced order to worship the guru on their own birthday. So, today, I make this my personal duty. I have three types of guru: (1) The word 'guru' (gu+ru) means 'the destroyer of ignorance'. The embodiment of unlimited knowledge is the Lord Himself, whose appearance destroys all ignorance. The Lord Himself is thus the root of the truth that is guru. (2) The second type is he who personally attracted and engaged me in the service of the Lord, who is himself another form of the Lord. This is he who founded the

worldwide Caitanya Maṭhas and Gauḍīya Maṭhas, my gurudeva,
Nityalīlāpraviṣṭa Prabhupāda Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Ṭhākura.
(3) Thirdly, all the Vaiṣṇavas are my gurus.

What do the Vaiṣṇavas do? Just as it is the guru's duty to constantly engage the disciple in the service of the supreme object of service—the Lord, so the Vaiṣṇavas keep us engaged in the service of Him. It is impossible for anyone to get away with any aberrant behaviour. If we deviate in any way, they will catch us. So I also include my disciples among my gurus.

Today, my disciples performed kīrtana and worshiped me as their guru. By listening to their kīrtana, I worshiped them. If by listening I had any untoward motives, if I had accepted it for my own sake, then there would have been no pūjā. Just as kīrtana is a devotional activity, so listening (śravaṇa) is also a devotional activity. However we express it, they are all my masters whom I must serve. But even though they are my masters—the objects of my service—the great affection I have for them compels me to instruct them, to take care of and protect them in the same way that Yaśodā and Nanda punished, instructed and took care of Gopāla. When Yaśodā bound little Gopāla to the mortar, she did not do so because she considered Him to be the object of her service; she did it because she considered Him to be her child. The object of service can be the one who protects and also the one who is protected, the one who takes care of and also the one who is taken care of. Therefore, both attitudes are found in a pure devotee.

Śrīla Prabhupāda called his disciples prabhu (master). He even called his most insignificant disciples prabhu and used the polite form of the pronoun 'you' (āpni). He used the more intimate pronouns 'tui' and 'tumi' with only very few of his disciples. He was never condescending. But he would chastise and instruct even those disciples whom he addressed as prabhu, using the respectful pronoun 'āpni'. When one calls someone prabhu, is it not paradoxical to then discipline him? Some might even consider it to be a kind of hypocrisy. But this is not hypocrisy on the part of the guru; when he calls his disciple 'master', he means it. On the other hand, when the situation necessitates it and the other mood comes upon him, he disciplines his disciple. From one vantage point, the spiritual master is a disciplinarian; from another, he is the disciple's dearest friend and well-wisher.

I am most grateful to all those who have blessed me today. May the result of

their blessings be that my every thought and instinct be directed toward the service of Kṛṣṇa and His devotees. And if anyone was really worshiping me, then he should know that he has in fact worshiped my spiritual master, who is the real object of worship. Service to the guru is service to God. I never saw anything in my guru other than the desire to achieve the pleasure of the Lord. He never for a moment thought that anything other than devotion to Kṛṣṇa was in the true interest of the conditioned souls. Had he thought thus, he would not have been able to keep someone like me in the Maṭha.

*vāco vegam manasaḥ krodha-vegam jihvā-vegam udaropastha-vegam etān
vegān yo viśaheta dhīraḥ sarvām apīmām pṛthivīm sa śiṣyāt*

(Upadeśāmṛta 1)

“A sober person who can tolerate the urges of speech, the mind and anger, as well as the urges to taste nice food, fill the belly and satisfy the genitals, is qualified to become spiritual master of the entire world.”

Those who have controlled the six urges are qualified to discipline others. Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura considered the above instruction to be directed toward householders and not to renunciates, but in fact, unless one has already been able to control the six urges, he is not qualified to leave the householder āśrama. Why then did Śrīla Prabhupāda make me a tyāgī, when I have not been able to master the six urges? Perhaps I can make a mistake, but he certainly could not have made one. As my well-wisher, as my protector and master, why did he keep me in the Maṭha? The reason is, he knew with certainty that there is no other way for anyone to achieve the ultimate good other than associating with Vaiṣṇavas and engaging in the service of the Supreme Lord. Through association with devotees and by hearing the scriptures, one is able to experience the greatness of the Lord. This gives him the impetus to serve the Lord. There is no guarantee that simply by superficially controlling the senses one will become a devotee. There are many eunuchs in the world who would have become devotees if that were the case. Such sense control or renunciation has no standing unless there is love for guru, Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā. Without love for Kṛṣṇa, without service to my Lord, all this renunciation is not worth a penny—it is false renunciation.

A renunciate or celibate who has no interest in service to the Lord is not dear to us as someone is who has dedicated himself to the Lord's service. This is because even though at first he may be somewhat erratic in controlling his senses, eventually, due to a higher taste, his senses will ultimately be completely mastered and he will have no interest in anything but Kṛṣṇa. Nothing else will enchant him:

*viṣayā vinivartante nirāhārasya dehinaḥ rasa-varjam raso 'py asya param
dṛṣṭvā nivartate*

(Bhagavad-gītā, 2.59)

“Although a person of gross, corporeal consciousness may avoid sense objects by means of external renunciation, his eagerness for sense enjoyment remains within. However, inner attachment to sense objects is spontaneously denounced by a person of properly adjusted intelligence due to his having had a glimpse of the all- attractive beauty of the Supreme Truth.”

One may fast, but does that stop one from desiring food? Even if one stops sense activities, the tendency to engage in such activities is not stopped. When one experiences a higher taste, however, one loses interest in the lower taste. When one has the experience of the joys of love for Kṛṣṇa, then the inferior pleasures of the world cease to hold any charm. This is called yukta-vairāgya. This is why Nārada instructed Yudhiṣṭhira, tasmāt kenāpy upāyena manaḥ kṛṣṇe niveśayet: “O Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira! Engage your mind in Kṛṣṇa by any means possible.” (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.1.32)

I may be renounced, but my mind is still accepting and rejecting thoughts and desires constantly. So, I am associating with my mind, not with Kṛṣṇa. What benefit can come of that? It is of no benefit to me to associate with someone who simply praises and flatters me. It is far more beneficial to find the company of someone who will discipline me, who will instruct me and show me my mistakes.

Devotion to Kṛṣṇa bears no relation to worldly learning or ignorance. If it did, then scholars and paṇḍitas would all have been devotees. One who has realized that the ultimate goal of life is Kṛṣṇa's pleasure alone does not need to waste his time in studies. I remember an event that took place when I was at the Madras Gauḍīya Maṭha, where I spent about ten years of my life. Through the efforts of Śrīpāda Śrīdhara Mahārāja, Śrīpāda Vana (Bon) Mahārāja, other venerable godbrothers and myself, we were able to build the Madras temple. Rāmacandra Aiyar, the son of Sadāśiva Aiyar, who had donated the land for the temple, advised us to learn Tamil so that we could preach to the general populace of the city. He even took steps to help us learn. I had been studying Tamil for only three days when a telegram came telling me to go to Purī. When I saw Prabhupāda, I told him that it would take about six months to learn Tamil. Śrīla Prabhupāda said, "Kṛṣṇa-bhakti is not preached by language. Through it, you may be able to transmit learning or scholarship, but that is all. One who possesses love for Kṛṣṇa communicates love for Kṛṣṇa. Preach in whatever languages you already know. I do not advise you to waste your valuable time learning other languages."

The Maṭha exists for culturing one's inherent love for Kṛṣṇa. Through such culture, one experiences happiness and communicates that happiness to others. One who loves Kṛṣṇa loves every single living being. Associating with saintly devotees awakens devotion to the Lord. The scriptures say: saṅgena sādhu-bhaktānām īśvarārādhanaena ca (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.7.30).

I may be incapable, but my worshipable Lord is not. If any of you engage me in the service of Kṛṣṇa and His devotees, then my worshipable Lords, Śrīla Prabhupāda, Mahāprabhu and Rādhā- Kṛṣṇa, will surely give you Their combined blessings. May all of you be successful, may Śrīla Prabhupāda be pleased with you all.

Conversations

An epitome of Transcendence

The following events took place in 1930 while Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Prabhupāda was still present.

A month-long festival was being held at the Calcutta Bagh Bazaar Gauḍīya Maṭha for Janmāṣṭamī. Each day a different dignitary was invited to sit as Honorary Chairman of the evening meeting. Some students of the world-renowned scientist Dr. C. V. Raman were among those who came regularly to listen to the lectures of the Gauḍīya Maṭha preachers. One day, these students came to see Śrīla Prabhupāda and complained that every day a different distinguished person was being made Honorary Chairman, but their professor, whose fame had spread throughout the world, had not even been invited.

Śrīla Prabhupāda answered that he had no objection to making Dr. Raman Honorary Chairman for an evening. He asked Śrīla Gurudeva to take charge of inviting him. Śrīla Gurudeva first went to Dr. Raman's house but did not find him there. The scientist's wife sent him with an orderly to Dr. Raman's laboratory on Circular Road. There, Śrīla Gurudeva met him on the second floor where he was sitting in a corner of a huge loft, engaged in his research activity. Dr. Raman spoke neither Bengali nor Hindi, so their conversation took place in English.

Upon being asked by Dr. Raman the reason for his coming, Śrīla Gurudeva answered, "A large month-long religious gathering is being held by the Bagh Bazaar Gauḍīya Maṭha on Janmāṣṭamī. On each day, a different dignitary of the city is invited to grace the Chairman's seat, and we humbly invite you to do the same."

Dr. Raman answered, "I do not believe in your keṣṭo-biṣṭu (Kṛṣṇa- Viṣṇu). I have no faith in anything that cannot be confirmed by direct sensory experience. I cannot waste my valuable time with imaginary things. I would prefer to attend any conference dealing with science or education, but not a religious one."

Śrīla Gurudeva said, "Your own students have been coming regularly to listen to the Maṭha's svāmījīs speak. It was their desire that you be honored in the same way that so many other Calcutta community leaders have been in the past. I have

been asked by my gurudeva to invite you, so please accept our invitation.”

Dr. Raman then challenged Śrīla Gurudeva: “Can you show me your God? If you can show Him to me, I will go.”

One side of the lab room in which the conversation was being held was a windowless, doorless wall, on the other side of which lay the whole of north Calcutta. Śrīla Gurudeva asked, “I can see nothing on the other side of this wall, but if I say that there is nothing there, will that be true?”

Dr. Raman answered, “Perhaps you cannot see what is there, but you could with the appropriate instruments.”

Śrīla Gurudeva then asked him, “There is a limit to what your instruments can do. You can only see as far as they allow you. Can you say that there is nothing beyond these limits?”

Dr. Raman replied, “Never mind. I will not waste my time on this. I will not give my attention to anything that is not within my sense experience. I will only spare my valuable time if you can actually show me your God. Can you do it?”

Śrīla Gurudeva: “If your students were to say to you that they will study your scientific findings only if you can show them the truth of what you have realised through your experiments, what would you say?”

Dr. Raman: “I would make them realize it!”

Śrīla Gurudeva: “Can you make them realized before teaching them?”

Dr. Raman: “No, I would first have to show them the process by which I have come to realize the truth. They will have to follow that process if they want to have the same realization. First they will have to earn their B.Sc. degree, then their M.Sc. Then they will have to study with me for another five years. Then I will be able to make them understand.”

Śrīla Gurudeva: “If that is true for you and your scientific knowledge, then can the seers of ancient India not say exactly the same thing? Follow their process and see whether you experience God’s existence or not. You are unable to show the scientific truths you profess to your students until they have adopted your process. Similarly, if you want to experience or understand God, you have to

follow the process by which that is accomplished. If it does not happen, then you can deny its value. But how can you deny its value without having experimented?”

Dr. Raman could not answer. After a few moments of silence, he said, “I know nothing about Kṛṣṇa. If I go, I will be able to say nothing. It will be better if you invite someone who knows something about these matters.”

Śrīla Gurudeva’s quick-wittedness and presence of mind was such that it was impossible to get away with an illogical statement in his presence. Such ability does not come with simple booklearning. Only one who has surrendered himself to his spiritual master and has come to direct realization of the truth through his mercy, can display such divine power. To such a person, a display of intelligence without any basis in realization cannot get very far.

The meaning of Śrī Vighraha

After Śrīla Gurudeva took sannyāsa, just prior to Indian independence (1947) and afterward, he went on an extended preaching tour throughout India and East Pakistan (modern-day Bangladesh) with several devotees. While in Jamurki-Pakulla in Mymensingh district, Śrīla Gurudeva gave a lecture in a paṇḍāl set up at the local high school. More than a thousand people of both Hindu and Muslim faiths were present in the audience that gathered that day. Several local policemen gave Śrīla Gurudeva a friendly warning that, following partition, the situation was tense in the new country of Pakistan. He was told to be careful about what he said and did, because the government was watching him. If complaints were made that something he said went against Pakistan’s interests, he could be jailed. After having received this warning and seeing the large numbers of police officers present in the crowd, Śrīla Gurudeva started to worry about the difficulties a devotee would have to face if put in prison, where contact with untouchable foodstuffs would be inevitable. Seeking to avoid any possibility of trouble, he requested the listeners to save their questions for the end of his discourse, at which time he would leave fifteen to twenty minutes to address them. He also said that he would entertain further inquiries on matters not related to his lecture in his quarters at another time. He requested that no one

interrupt the lecture to ask questions, for it would disrupt the proceedings and cause a disturbance to the other listeners.

Despite this request, however, after Śrīla Gurudeva had been speaking for half an hour, a maulvī (Muslim scholar) stood up and asked, “What is the reasoning behind the Hindu custom of worshiping idols (but-parastī)?” Many of the people in the audience were irritated by the interruption, and told him to be quiet and Śrīla Gurudeva not to answer. But Śrīla Gurudeva welcomed the maulvī’s question by praising it, saying that it was deserving of an answer from which everyone present could profit. Furthermore, by answering it he would not wander from the subject under discussion, but would rather enrich it.

He then proceeded to deal with the maulvī’s question as follows. He said that before answering him, he wished to ask him a question: “Do you believe in God (Khudā)?”

“Of course I do.”

“Do you believe in Khudā’s omnipotence?”

The maulvī loudly declared, “Khudā is all-powerful!”

Śrīla Gurudeva then laughed and said, “There, you have your answer.”

Not realising the implications of the word ‘omnipotent’, the maulvī was at first confused by Śrīla Gurudeva’s answer. So, Gurudeva started to clarify by asking, this time with the help of an example: “Is God powerful enough to push a Mymensimha elephant through the hole of the smallest needle without even harming a hair on his body?” When the maulvī remained silent, Śrīla Gurudeva continued, “Perhaps Maulvī Sāheb does not know the extent of Khudā’s powers, but the fact is that nothing is impossible for the omnipotent Lord.

Kartum akartum anyathā kartum yaḥ samarthaḥ sa eva īśvaraḥ.

He can do whatever He wishes, not do something if He does not wish to do it, or undo or change whatever He has done. The Supreme Lord is all-powerful and nothing is beyond His abilities. The omnipotent Lord is not limited to the powers that we ascribe to Him; that is not what is meant by omnipotence. The sarva-śaktimān is one who possesses all powers imaginable and unimaginable. Once we have accepted that the Supreme Lord is omnipotent, we cannot say, ‘He can

do such and such, but not this or that.’ So, in accordance with His wishes, the supremely powerful Lord can appear in any form He desires, at any time, with His full complement of powers. If you say that He cannot, then there is no point in claiming that He is all- powerful.

Any figure that a man may create out of the five elements, or any entity that he imagines with his material mind—whether with form or formless—is completely material. That is what we call a putalā or idol. There is no regulation in sanātana-dharma for the worship of such idols. What is ordained, rather, is service to the Lord’s deity form or Śrī Vighraha. Śrī Vighraha is that form which the all-powerful Supreme Lord feels obliged to accept as a result of His devotee’s love for Him. There is a gulf of difference between an idol and the Lord’s deity form. Even though the Lord’s deity form is purely spiritual, cid-ānanda-māyā, a materially conditioned soul is unable to recognise Him, just as he would be unable to recognise the Lord if He appeared directly before him. One can only perceive the Lord’s divine form with eyes of pure devotion. A vision of the Lord which has not been earned is not a true vision of the Lord.”

Seeing the Paramātmā

Srīla Gurudeva once went to Hauli, Assam, where there was a huge gathering. Followers of all religions were welcome and so it was that half of the participants were Muslim and half were Hindus. As usual, Guru Mahārāja asked the audience to save their questions for the end. Here again, however, a maulvī interrupted to ask, “Svāmījī, have you seen ātmā and Paramātmā, soul and Supersoul? Can anyone say he has seen them? I think no one has ever seen ātmā and Paramātmā and that you are deceiving the world by speaking of them.”

Both the organizers of the meeting and the people in the audience were displeased with this challenger, but Guru Mahārāja answered him respectfully. He said, “You are obviously a learned person. May I ask you a question? What is the name of the book you are holding?” The man stated the name of the book. Guru Mahārāja replied, “I cannot see it. I cannot see the name of the book. You are deceiving me.” Others came there and looked at the book’s cover and confirmed the first man’s statement. “Svāmījī, this man has told you the correct

name of this book.”

Guru Mahārāja replied, “I have my eyes and my eyesight is good. Yet I do not see what you say you do. You are collectively deceiving me. To me, it looks as though a crow stepped in ink and then walked on paper to make all those marks. I see nothing but a crow’s footprints.”

Hearing this, the maulvī was enraged, “Svāmījī, do you not know Urdu?”

“No, I do not.”

The maulvī replied, “Then how can you expect to understand? You have to go through the alphabet and then you will be able to read it and understand. You have to earn the ability!”

Then Guru Mahārāja said, “You have given the answer to your own question. Even if someone knows many languages, he will not be able to understand Urdu unless he has learned it. Even if one has good eyesight, unless he knows Urdu, he will neither be able to recognise what sounds its script represents, nor what the meaning of those sounds is. The same thing goes for understanding ātmā and Paramātmā. Even if one has great learning and experience in this world, unless he has specifically earned the qualifications to experience the Lord, he will not be able to experience Him.

There are two kinds of vision, one based on knowledge (veda- dṛk), the other on simple sensual capabilities (māṁsa-dṛk). The physical eye can only see physical objects and nothing else. Things that are beyond matter and the senses are self-revelatory and can only be seen with the Lord’s blessings. Truth is revealed only in the heart of the surrendered soul.”

Brāhmaṇa vs Vaiṣṇava

Debate with Paṇḍita Pañcānana Tarkaratna

Śrīla Gurudeva was adept at refuting all arguments contrary to the path of devotion and at establishing the conclusions of pure devotion. Impressed by the persuasive intellect and humble, respectful demeanour of His disciple, Śrīla Prabhupāda sent Śrīla Gurudeva to meet Paṇḍita Pañcānana Tarkaratna of Naihāṭi, Bhaṭṭapallī on 4 October 1936. This Paṇḍita had strongly criticised Śrīla Prabhupāda's views on daiva-varṇāśrama, which were based on the sacred scriptures. Śrīla Prabhupāda feared that such criticism from a renowned person like Paṇḍita Pañcānana Tarkaratna would harm sincere seekers of the truth due to his powerful and influential stature among brāhmaṇa scholars. The Paṇḍita even refused to debate with a non-brāhmaṇa. In order to approach the Paṇḍita, Śrīla Prabhupāda referred to Śrīla Gurudeva's brāhmaṇa lineage prior to entering the order and also went so far as to hide the signs of a Vaiṣṇava altogether. Without hesitation, Śrīla Gurudeva accepted his Guru Mahārāja's words as his command.

Śrīla Gurudeva reached the residence of Śrī Tarkaratna in Kāṭhālpāḍā at 8:30 a.m. accompanied by Śrī Prafulla Kumāra Caṭṭopādhyāya. Śrīla Gurudeva was first introduced to the worthy son of the scholar, Śrī Jīva Nyāyatīrtha, M. A. Afterwards, Śrīla Gurudeva sat down for a two-hour debate with Śrī Tarkaratna.

He would later recount his experience to his listeners: "There is no doubt that Śrī Pañcānana Tarkaratna is a man of great scholarship. However, even though he knows numerous verses by heart, he cannot provide convincing solutions to many philosophical problems. Consistently following the path of dry argument, he reaches a dead-end and is unable to give satisfactory replies to important questions." Analysing the reason why this should be the case with such a great scholar, Śrīla Gurudeva said, "Paṇḍita Mahārāja has not had the association of a pure devotee, nor has he met a real sādhu. Without the blessings of a saintly person, it is not possible to arrive at and realise the ultimate conclusion."

The main contents of the debate have been published in the 13th & 15th volumes of the 15th year of a Bengali weekly journal published by Śrīla Prabhupāda under the auspices of Śrī Gauḍīya Maṭha. The title of the article is Karma-jaḍa-smārta-vāda O Śuddha-bhāgavata-siddhānta ("Mundane Ritualistic Works vs. Pure Devotion"). It was published in the form of a dialogue. In this article, Śrīla Gurudeva is referred to as "Mahopadeśaka."

First, Mahopadeśaka Śrīyukta Heramba Kumāra Bandyopādhyāya met the worthy son of Tarkaratna, Śrīyukta Jīva Nyāyatīrtha, M.A. When Prafulla Bābu introduced Śrīla Gurudeva as a preacher of Śrī Gauḍīya Maṭha, Nyāyatīrtha Mahārāja warmly welcomed him indicating that he was well aware of the activities of the Gauḍīya Maṭha in India and abroad. Nyāyatīrtha then quoted the following Sanskrit verse:

*yathā kāñcanatām yāti kāmśyaṁ rasa-vidhānataḥ tathā dīkṣā-vidhānena
dvijatvaṁ jāyate nṛṇāṁ*

(Hari-bhakti-vilāsa 2.12)

[As bell metal can be turned into gold when treated with mercury, a disciple initiated by a bona fide guru immediately attains the position of a brāhmaṇa.]

He asked, “Are these not the words of your Gauḍīya Maṭha?” Mahopadeśaka replied, “These are the words of the Sātvata-pañcarātra Tattvasāgara. These have been compiled by Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī Prabhu according to the instructions of Śrī Caitanyadeva Himself.”

Nyāyatīrtha: Have you not used the words daikṣā brāhmaṇa?

Mahopadeśaka: These are the words of Jagadguru Śrīdhara Svāmipāda and Bhārgavīya Manu:

trivṛt śaukraṁ sāvitraṁ daikṣyaṁ iti triguṇitaṁ janma (Bhāvārtha-dīpikā
10.23.29)

[There are three kinds of birth—śaukra, sāvitra, and daikṣa— according to their different qualities.]

mātur agre ’dhi-jananaṁ dvitīyaṁ mauñjibandhane tṛtīyaṁ yajña-dīkṣāyām

dvijasya śruti-codanāt

(Manu-smṛti 2.169)

[The śruti states that a brāhmaṇa gets his first birth from his mother (śaukra-janma or seminal birth). He gets his second birth by receiving the sacred thread (sāvitra-janma), and finally he gets his third birth by yajña-dīkṣā (ceremonial initiation at a fire sacrifice).]

They debated in this manner for about fifteen minutes, after which Śrīla Gurudeva expressed his desire to meet Tarkaratna Mahārāja. In response, he was taken up to the first floor of the residence. Paṇḍita Tarkaratna asked Śrīla Gurudeva, “What is your name and where do you come from?”

Śrīla Gurudeva replied, “My name is Heramba Kumāra Bandyopādhyāya, and my previous residence was Vikrampur, Bharākara. At present, I am a humble servant of Śrī Gauḍīya Maṭha. I have come to Naihāṭi for the purpose of preaching with other tridaṇḍis.”

Tarkaratna, repeating the verse which his son had spoken earlier, said, “Yathā kāñcanatām yāti. Are these not the words of your Gauḍīya Maṭha?”

Mahopadeśaka again explained, “These are from Sātvata-smṛti and Pañcarātra. Śrī Caitanyadeva and the six Gosvāmīs have spread this śrauta message (supported by the Vedic scriptures). Śrī Gauḍīya Maṭha is totally committed to Śrī Caitanyadeva’s life, teachings and, in particular, His interpretations of Śrīmad- Bhāgavatam.”

Tarkaratna: In what way does the Gauḍīya Maṭha follow Śrī Caitanya? I feel that they do not.

Mahopadeśaka: Do you know about Śrī Caitanya? If so, then what is your opinion of Him?

Tarkaratna: Śrī Caitanyadeva was a great devotee and scholar.

Mahopadeśaka: I'm sure that you must have perused Caitanya- caritāmṛta and other chronicles.

Tarkaratna: Yes, I have read Caitanya-caritāmṛta. It is in the Bengali payāra metre. It does not require much scholarship to understand Śrī Caitanyadeva. Anybody can do so.

Mahopadeśaka: Do you not admit that different levels of readers may have different interpretations of the same subject?

Tarkaratna: Caitanya-caritāmṛta is simple and easy to follow. It can be understood by anyone. It is not required that one be a man of learning to peruse it.

Mahopadeśaka: (pointing to some students present there) Does each of your students understand your lessons in an identical manner? In the Chāndogya Upaniṣad (chapter 8, sections 7-12) we find that Virocana and Indra had both visited Lord Brahmā to learn the Vedas. From the same mantra given to both of them, they arrived at different conclusions. Due to his mistaken interpretation, Virocana spread the philosophy of greed and materialism, while Indra, understanding the core of Brahmā's teaching, spread the divine message. The scriptures say that the neem and mango trees grow together by the banks of the Ganges River. Both are nourished by the same river, but one bears sweet fruit while the fruit of the other is bitter. In the same way, the one Caitanya-caritāmṛta produces poison in one person and nectar in another.

Tarkaratna: We have learned from Caitanya-caritāmṛta that Caitanyadeva never ate food cooked by a non-brāhmaṇa. Do you admit this to be true?

Mahopadeśaka: Caitanya-caritāmṛta says that Śrī Caitanyadeva only accepted the invitations of bhojyāṇṇa brāhmaṇas (Vaiṣṇava brāhmaṇas). He never did otherwise. Had He gone to the houses of brāhmaṇas in general (i.e., including non-Vaiṣṇava brāhmaṇas), then the words bhojyāṇṇa and abhojyāṇṇa would not have been used. In fact, Caitanyadeva accepted food in the house of a Sanoḍiyā brāhmaṇa, from whom high class brāhmaṇa do not even accept water, because the brāhmaṇa was a follower of Śrī Mādhavendra Purī. This was in keeping with the ideals of Purīpāda. In Caitanya- caritāmṛta (Antya-līlā 8.88-89), it is stated:

*abhojyāṇṇa vipra yadi kareṇa nimantraṇa prasāda-mūlya la-ite lāge kauḍi dui-
paṇa*

*bhojyāṇṇa vipra yadi nimantraṇa kare kichu ‘prasāda’ āne, kichu pāka kare
ghare*

[When a brāhmaṇa at whose home an invitation could not be accepted invited the Lord, he would pay two paṇas of conchshells (the currency of that time) to purchase the prasādam (Jagannatha- prasāda). When a brāhmaṇa at whose home an invitation could be accepted invited Him, the brāhmaṇa would purchase part of the prasādam and cook the rest at home.]

Tarkaratna: However, when Śrī Caitanyadeva resided in the house of Bhakta Candraśekhara at Kāśī, He took him to be a śūdra and went to eat at the house of Tapana Miśra, who was a brāhmaṇa.

Mahopadeśaka: Take note that Śrī Caitanyadeva never accepted the invitations of māyāvādī brāhmaṇa sannyāsīs, even though those sannyāsīs were brāhmaṇas, tyāgīs (renunciates), tapasvīs (performers of austerities) and of virtuous character:

*tapana-miśrera ghare bhikṣā-nirvāhaṇa sannyāsīra saṅge nāhi māne
nimantraṇa* (Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā 7.46)

[Śrīman Mahāprabhu used to take His meals at the house of Tapana Miśra. He would not accept invitations to dine with any of the other sannyāsīs.]

Śrīman Mahāprabhu did not eat at the house of Candraśekhara Ācārya, but instead ate at the house of Tapana Miśra because His main aim in coming to Kāśī was to save the māyāvādīs, not because of any caste differences. For this purpose, He even donned the garb of the māyāvādī sannyāsīs. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu acted just like a detective in disguise in order to defeat the

māyāvādī sannyāsīs and their philosophy of māyāvāda and karma-jaḍa- smārta-dharma. A detective sometimes dresses like a criminal and mingles with them in order to catch them. Thus, for practical purposes, Śrī Caitanyadeva adopted this external appearance. Everyone knows that the makeup and clothing of a detective are just an act.

Tarkaratna: Apart from Kāśī, Mahāprabhu could have eaten with or partaken of food cooked by His followers of lower caste. Why did He not do so?

Mahopadeśaka: Following the instructions of Śrīman Mahāprabhu, Śrī Advaita sat with and shared a meal with Ṭhākura Haridāsa, who was a yavana (Muslim) by birth. This took place at Śrī Advaita’s residence:

...prabhu balena vacana... mukunda-haridāsa laiya karaha bhojana

tabe ta’ ācārya saṅge lañā dui jane karila icchāya bhojana, ye āchila mane

(Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 3.105-107)

[Śrīman Mahāprabhu said to Advaita Ācārya, “Take Mukunda and Haridāsa with You and accept Your meal.” Thereupon, Advaita Ācārya went with the two of them and they all honoured the prasādam of Caitanya Mahāprabhu and Nityānanda Prabhu according to their hearts’ desire.]

The Supreme Lord, Who is independent of all rules or mundane considerations, would graciously accept alms only from those persons who by His mercy only, desired to give Him alms. The unique quality of bhakti is that there is no effort on the part of the pure devotee to enjoy Guru-Vaiṣṇava-Bhagavān for the satisfaction of the material, sensual ego (i.e., there is no desire for any material benefit from Guru-Vaiṣṇava-Bhagavān). In this, there is no place for the worldly caste of the karma-marga or other related considerations. When Bhagavān desires to accept some service, His devotees carry out that service in like manner for the satisfaction of their Object of Service.

Ācāryavarya Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, who was always blessed by the thoughts and teachings of Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, has quoted the following verses of

the Garuḍa Purāṇa in his Bhakti- sandarbha (177):

brāhmaṇānām sahasrebhyaḥ satra-yājī viśiṣyatesatra-yājī-sahasrebhyaḥ sarva-vedānta-pāragāḥ sarva-vedānta-vit-koṭyā viṣṇu-bhakto viśiṣyate vaiṣṇavānām sahasrebhya ekānty eko viśiṣyate

[One yājñika (performer of Vedic sacrifices) is greater than a thousand brāhmaṇas. One person versed in all the śāstras is greater than a thousand yājñikas. One Vaiṣṇava is greater than a million Vedic scholars, and one unalloyed Vaiṣṇava is greater than a thousand other Vaiṣṇavas.]

Kālidāsa, although born in a high, upper caste family, picked up and ate the remnants of food left in the garbage by Jhaḍu Ṭhākura, who belonged to a low caste bhuinmālī (gardener) family. Śrī Caitanyadeva could not have upheld these examples if He had looked upon Haridāsa Ṭhākura and Jhaḍu Ṭhākura as yavana and bhuinmālī respectively.

Tarkaratna: Yes, bhakti is the greatest, but the scriptures do not state that bhakti does away with the concept of untouchability.

Mahopadeśaka: To say that a devotee can be untouchable is like saying “a clay gold pot,” (i.e., a pot made of gold certainly cannot be made of clay; the pot can be made of either gold or clay, but not both. In this way, a devotee is worshipable by all. Therefore, it is meaningless to say that a devotee can be untouchable, just as it is meaningless to say, “a clay gold pot.”) If Śrī Caitanyadeva had regarded Haridāsa Ṭhākura to be an untouchable, could He have lifted his body after death and danced with it? To Śrī Caitanyadeva, the body of a devotee was holy and pure. By mundane calculation, the body should have been doubly impure. Not only was the man who had been in this body an outcaste (outside the four varṇas), but the body itself was now dead! And yet Mahāprabhu said that all the waters, winds and all things as far as the ocean had become great tīrthas (holy places of pilgrimage) by the touch of Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura. Had Śrī Mahāprabhu thought differently, could the other devotees have drunk the water that had washed the lowest part of Haridāsa’s body, his feet? However, that is exactly what the devotees did in the presence of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

The example set by Śrī Caitanya in this regard is not unique. Previously, the Vaiṣṇava ācāryas of yore had exhibited similar behaviour. Śrī Rāmānuja was born a brāhmaṇa of the highest order. His guru, Śrī Mahāpūrṇa, had performed the last rites of a devotee born in a low caste. The smārta-brāhmaṇas immediately reacted to this with strong criticism and Śrī Mahāpūrṇa was even ostracised by his relatives and family. Upon hearing this, Śrī Rāmānuja rushed to his guru. Śrī Mahāpūrṇa told Rāmānuja that he had acted according to the dictates of the scriptures, as it was their duty to follow in the footsteps of the mahājanas (great devotees). Although Jaṭāyu was a bird, since he was a great devotee, his last rites were performed by Bhagavān Śrī Rāmacandra Himself. King Yudhiṣṭhira, born in a kṣatriya family, used to worship Vidura, whose mother belonged to a śūdra caste. Thus, following the example of these holy personalities, Śrī Mahāpūrṇa achieved great satisfaction by serving one of his devotees in this fashion. Actually, his relatives and acquaintances had done him a great favour by ostracising him. He had been trying to escape from their bad association for a long time. By the grace of God, it had now happened inadvertently by their own efforts!

In the book Prapaṇāmṛta, we hear the story of Tiruppāna, who was born a low caste caṇḍāla in South India. Once, he lost consciousness while chanting the Holy Names of Hari by the bank of the river Kāverī. At that time, a brāhmaṇa priest named Muni was returning to the Śrī Raṅganātha temple with water for the Deity's abhiṣeka (bath). Seeing the caṇḍāla Tiruppāna lying on the bank of the river, he repeatedly called out to him in a rude manner. Disdaining to touch the lowborn person with his hands, and fearful that the water meant for the Deity might become impure, he threw a lump of earth at the prostrate figure and awakened him. Arriving at the temple, Muni found that the doors were bolted from inside. After calling out for a long time, the priest heard a voice speak to him. The voice said that Śrī Raṅganātha Himself had been injured by the lump of earth that had been thrown at His humble servant by this proud priest. Unless the priest circumambulated the temple carrying the devotee on his shoulders, the doors of the temple would not open. Thus, it came to pass that the priest did as he had been ordered, and only then did the doors of the temple open. The Tiruppāni Śrī Vaiṣṇavas still worship Tiruppāna as Munivāhana because a brāhmaṇa named Muni had carried him (acted as his vāhana) around the temple. Rāmānujācārya and others, belonging to the cream of the brāhmaṇas, worshipped Munivāhana daily.

Ālavandāra Yāmunācārya, who was also a brāhmaṇa, offered praṇāmas to

Bhakta Śaṭhakopa, the avatāra of a devotee, who was born in a śūdra family:

*mātā-pitā yuvatayas tanayā vibhūtiḥ sarvaṁ yadeva niyamena madanvayānām
ādyasya naḥ kalupater-bakulābhirāmaṁ śrīmat-tad-aṅghri yugalaṁ praṇamāmi
mūrdhnā*

(Stotra-ratna 7)

[I reverently bow my head to the blessed feet, attractive as bakula flowers, of Śaṭhakopa, the first ācārya of our devotional family. For our disciplic succession, his lotus feet are everything— our father, mother, son, wife, and wealth.]

Tarkaratna: How can a śūdra be the guru of a brāhmaṇa? In which scripture has this been stated? Even Caitanyadeva did not agree with this.

Mahopadeśaka: I am surprised to hear these words from a learned person like you who is well versed in the scriptures. But Sarasvatī compels you to speak the truth. A śūdra can never be the guru of a brāhmaṇa. A Vaiṣṇava is not a śūdra. One who serves Viṣṇu is a yogī established in knowledge of Brahman:

*arceye viṣṇau śilā-dhīr guruṣu nara-matir vaiṣṇave jāti-buddhir viṣṇor vā
vaiṣṇavānām kali-mala-mathane pāda-tīrthe 'mbu- buddhiḥ śrī-viṣṇor nāmni
mantre sakala-kaluṣa-he śabda-sāmānya- buddhir viṣṇau sarveśvareṣe tad-
itara-sama-dhīr yasya vā nārakī saḥ*

(Padma Purāṇa)

[Anyone who considers the Deity to be nothing but stone, the guru to be an ordinary human being, or the Vaiṣṇava to be a member of a particular caste or race, who takes the holy water which has washed Viṣṇu or the Vaiṣṇava's feet and can destroy all the sins of the age of Kali to be ordinary water, who thinks that the name or mantra of Viṣṇu, which destroys all evils, is the same as any

other sound, or who takes Viṣṇu to be equal to anything other than Him, has a hellish nature and is a great sinner.]

Upon hearing this verse, Tarkaratna remained silent for some time.

Mahopadeśaka further said, “You have read in Caitanya- caritāmṛta that Ṭhākura Haridāsa was the guru of the brāhmaṇa Balarāma Ācārya. In that same literature, you have seen:

kibā vipra, kibā nyāsī, śūdra kene naya yei kṛṣṇa-tattva-vettā, sei ‘guru’ haya
(Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 8.128)

[Whether one is a brāhmaṇa, a sannyāsī or a śūdra—regardless of what he is—he can become a guru if he knows the science of Kṛṣṇa.]

Tarkaratna: This might be justified as regards the śikṣā-guru (the instructing guru), but surely the dīkṣā-guru (initiating guru) must be a brāhmaṇa.

Mahopadeśaka: In the Padma Purāṇa, quoted by Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī Prabhu in Hari-bhakti-vilāsa, it is said:

na śūdrā bhagavad-bhaktās te tu bhāgavatā matāḥ sarva-varṇeṣu te śūdrā ye na bhaktā janārdane

[Devotees of the Lord are never śūdras; rather they are all first- class bhāgavatas. But if one is not a devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa, he should be considered a śūdra even if he was born in a brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya or vaiśya family.]

*ṣaṭ-karma-nipuṇo vipro mantra-tantra-viśāradaḥ avaiṣṇavo gurur na syād
vaiṣṇavaḥ śva-paco guruḥ*

[Even if a brāhmaṇa is very learned in Vedic scriptures and knows the six occupational duties of a brāhmaṇa, he cannot become a guru unless he is a devotee of the Supreme Lord. However, if one is born in a family of dog-eaters but is a pure devotee of the Lord, he can become a guru.]

mahā-kula-prasūto 'pi sarva-yajñeṣu dīkṣitaḥ sahasra-śākhādhyāyī ca na guruḥ syād avaiṣṇavaḥ

[Even if born in an aristocratic brāhmaṇa family, initiated with all the appropriate Vedic sacrifices and learned in one thousand branches of Vedic knowledge, one who is not a Vaiṣṇava can never be a guru.]

vipra kṣatriya vaiśyās ca guravaḥ śūdra janmanām śūdrās ca guravas teṣāṁ trayāṇām bhagavat-priyāḥ

[A brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya or vaiśya can be guru for the śūdra class, but a Vaiṣṇava, even if born a śūdra, because he is dear to the Supreme Lord, can be the guru of these higher orders.]

There is no factual difference between the śikṣā-guru and the dīkṣā-guru. There only exist differences in their pastimes. The śikṣā-guru acquaints us with Śrī Kṛṣṇa in Whom we seek shelter. The dīkṣā-guru establishes a relationship with the same Supreme Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Thus, neither contradicts the other. Both are gurus and are beyond mundane discrimination. In the Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Ādi-līlā 1.44-47), it is stated:

yadyapi āmāra guru—caitanyera dāsa tathāpi jāniye āmi tāñhāra prakāśa guru kṛṣṇa-rūpa hana śāstrera pramāṇe

*guru-rūpe kṛṣṇa kṛpā karena bhakta-gaṇe ācāryaṁ mām vijānīyān nāvamanyeta
karhicit na martya-buddhyāsūyeta sarva-deva-mayo guruḥ*

śikṣā-guruke ta' jāni kṛṣṇera svarūpa antaryāmī, bhakta-śreṣṭha,—ei dui rūpa

[Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī: Although I know that my guru is a servitor of Śrī Caitanya, I know Him also as a plenary manifestation of the Lord. According to the deliberate opinion of all revealed scriptures, the guru is nondifferent from Lord Kṛṣṇa. Śrī Kṛṣṇa in the form of the guru delivers His devotees. Lord Kṛṣṇa says to Uddhava, “One should know the ācārya as Myself and never disrespect him in any way. One should not envy him, thinking him an ordinary man, for he is the representative of all the demigods.” One should know the śikṣā-guru to be the absolute counterpart of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Lord Kṛṣṇa manifests Himself as the Paramātmā and as the greatest devotee of the Lord.]

Kibā vipra, kibā nyāsī—If these words referred only to the śikṣā-guru, then would Śrīman Mahāprabhu have taken dīkṣā from the sannyāsī Śrīla Īsvara Purī? Would Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu and Advaita Ācārya have taken dīkṣā from Śrīla Mādhavendra Purī Gosvāmī? Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī Prabhu, who was born in a kāyastha caste, is famous among the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas as Jagadguru and Ācārya. The brāhmaṇas Śrī Gaṅgā-nārāyaṇa Cakravartī and Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa Bhaṭṭācārya took dīkṣā from Śrīla Narottama Ṭhākura (a non-brāhmaṇa by material estimation). Śrīla Yadunandana Cakravartī of Katwa took initiation from Śrīla Gadādhara dāsa, and Śrī Rasikānanda (a smārta-brāhmaṇa) took initiation from Śrī Śyāmānanda (a low-class brāhmaṇa by material consideration). Śrī Rāmakṛṣṇa's father, Śivāi Bhaṭṭācārya, was furious when he heard that his son had taken dīkṣā from Śrīla Narottama Ṭhākura:

*ore mūrkhā! kaha dekhi kona śāstre kaya? brāhmaṇa haite ki vaiṣṇava baḍa
haya? vipra śiṣya kaila se vā kemana vaiṣṇava? paṇḍitera samāje karāva
parābhava*

(Narottama-vilāsa, 10th vilāsa)

[O fool, which one among the scriptures has said that the Vaiṣṇavas are superior to brāhmaṇas? What type of a Vaiṣṇava is he to have initiated a brāhmaṇa? I will have him accept defeat and humiliation before the society of scholars.]

In his work Narottama-vilāsa, the brāhmaṇa Śrī Narahari Cakravartī has given great importance to this and other similar incidents. He narrates how Śivāi Bhaṭṭācārya had invited Murāri Paṇḍita to a debate on the topic of bhāgavata-dharma and how Digvijaya Murāri Paṇḍita had been humiliated and ultimately defeated.

Thus, it is nothing new for proponents of karma-jaḍa-smārta philosophy to present incorrect arguments. They know and yet refuse to understand. They know, but nonetheless will not practice the teachings of the scriptures. If they did, they would lose their identification with their bodies and sacrifice their material interests. This they find impossible to do. However, the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, śruti, smṛti, Purāṇas and Pañcarātra loudly proclaim that it is the Vaiṣṇava who has acquired brahminical qualification in a spiritual sense, apart from any material considerations. Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī Prabhu points out that Kaimutika Nyāya accepts this concept of spiritual brahminhood. As there are a thousand coins in a lakh (100,000 rupees), so too there is brahminhood in a Vaiṣṇava.

Tarkaratna: Where has this brahminhood been discussed in śruti?

Mahopadeśaka: Śruti says that brahminhood can be determined by means of the observation of a person's actions. In the Sāmavedīya Chāndogya Upaniṣad (4.4.5), we come to know of Satyakāma and Gautama. Gautama Ṛṣi determined the caste of Satyakāma by the yardsticks of truthfulness and simplicity:

taṁ hovāca kiṁ gotro nu saumyasīti.

sa hovāca nāhametadveda bho yad-gotro 'ham asmi. aprcchaṁ mātaram sā mā pratyabravīd bahvaṁ carantī paricārīṇī yauvane tvāmalabhe. sāhaṁ etat na veda yad-gotras-tvamasī.

jābālā tu nāmā ahamasmi, satyakāmo nāma tvamasīti. so 'haṁ satyakāmo jābālo 'smi bho iti.

taṁ hovāca naitadabrāhmaṇo vivaktum-arhati samidhaṁ saumyā āhara. upa tvā nesye. na satyādagā iti.

(Chāndogya Upaniṣad 4.4.4-5)

[Gautama asked Satyakāma, “My dear boy, what is your gotra?” The boy said, “I do not know what my caste or family background is. I asked my mother, and she said, ‘When I was young, I wandered here and there and knew many men. Then you were born. I knew so many men that I don’t know who your father is, or what your caste is. All I know is that my name is Jābālā and your name is Satyakāma (One who wants truth).’ Therefore I am known as Satyakāma Jābāla, and do not know my caste.” Gautama said, “My dear boy, you speak truthfully, and therefore you must be a brāhmaṇa. No one but a brāhmaṇa could speak such an unpalatable truth. O beautiful young boy, go and bring me wood for the sacrificial fire. I shall initiate you as my disciple, for you never depart from the truth.”]

Tarkaratna: This is another example of your wishful thinking. Satyakāma Jābāla was of brāhmaṇa parentage.

Mahopadeśaka: Where is the proof of this?

Tarkaratna: Only those who have brāhmaṇa blood in them show the inclination, when they come of age, to go to the guru and pursue learning. From these tendencies, we can surmise that Satyakāma was of brāhmaṇa heritage.

Mahopadeśaka: Often, it is seen that brāhmaṇa youths are reluctant to stay with the guru and follow the path of brahmacarya and learning. Even today, one is confronted by many hundreds of examples of this.

Tarkaratna: You have misinterpreted the word bahvahaṁ. It should not be taken to mean “serving many men,” but “many kinds of service.”

Mahopadeśaka: Let us assume that you are right. If Jābālā had been an extremely devoted wife and had served her husband in many ways, how could she have forgotten her husband’s name?

Tarkaratna: It is not customary for a wife to utter her husband’s name, so she

could not tell it to her son.

Mahopadeśaka: Again, let us assume that you are right and that the devoted wife could not utter the name of her husband. What, however, prevented her from mentioning his gotra (family name)? In bahvahan̄, the word bahu is to be understood as an adverb. Bahu implies serving many people, in many ways, and in many places. Immediately after this comes yauvane tvāmalabhe (“I begot you in my youth”), thus indicating the fruit of her services. If Jābālā did not know her husband’s gotra due to being absorbed in executing many services at home, then what would be the significance of the words yauvane tvāmalabhe? “By performing many services, I have begotten you in my youth”—can this be taken as an excuse for not knowing her husband’s gotra? By using the term yauvane (“in my youth”), Jābālā has, in a serious and discreet manner, told Satyakāma the truth. It would be a transgression of truth to interpret it otherwise for some other purpose. A child is conceived only in youth. “By serving many in my youth I have begotten you.” It seems clear that any other interpretation of the word is irrelevant. Gautama Ṛṣi understood the subtlety of these dignified and polite words. Had he not, he would not have acclaimed Satyakāma to be truthful and honest. There is nothing out of the ordinary when one mentions the names of one’s parents. However, Gautama praised Satyakāma’s good qualities when he realised that Satyakāma was saying something special, and not at all ordinary. Gautama Ṛṣi said, “Only a brāhmaṇa could make such a bold statement, thus I will initiate you with brāhmaṇa rites.”

To be simple and truthful is to publicly admit what might be harmful to one’s own self. Generic, ordinary statements do not merit attention, nor can they be taken to be the hallmark of higher qualities such as truthfulness and simplicity. Thus, the meaning is very clear. The name of the gotra is mentioned at the time of marriage and again when a child is conceived. It is surprising that on both occasions Jābālā failed to register it. Jābālā got married, lived with her husband, had a son, and yet she did not know her husband’s name and gotra? Eminent scholars of the scriptures and leaders of society should question the motives of those who contrive to paint a picture of Jābālā as a naive simpleton. In their advocacy of this absurdity, they have not shown Jābālā as she really was, and have thereby thrust falsehood and deceit into an episode highlighting simplicity and truthfulness. Religious men and women of society all know the names of their parents and their gotra. No other arguments should be raised to cover this simple, honest and dignified statement of the boy Satyakāma. It was due to his unabashed openness about such a shameful fact that Gautama appreciated his

straightforwardness and hailed him as a brāhmaṇa. This is the interpretation of the Sāma Veda in Mādhva-bhāṣya:

ārjvavam brāhmaṇe sākṣāt śūdro 'nārjava-lakṣaṇāḥ gautamastv iti vijñāya satya-kāmamupānayat

[A brāhmaṇa possesses the quality of simplicity, and a śūdra possesses the quality of crookedness. Knowing this fact, Gautama awarded sacred thread initiation to Satyakāma and made him a first-class brāhmaṇa.]

Tarkaratna did not reply to this example, but instead moved on: “In this life, no matter how high a person rises in spiritual practice, he cannot be awarded the honour and seat of a person who is a brāhmaṇa by birth. He can claim this only after death, in another birth in a brāhmaṇa family.”

Mahopadeśaka: The person who is a brāhmaṇa by birth is tied to his karma. The devotee of the Supreme Lord does not take to such lowly ambitions as to roam in the cycle of cause and effect. The devotee disdains the titles of Brahmā or Indra, and regards the heavenly planets and mokṣa (liberation) to be no higher than hell. Even the faintest traces of bhakti will not show themselves unless one scorns and spurns bhukti (sense enjoyment) and mukti (liberation from material existence):

nārāyaṇa-parāḥ sarve na kutaścana bibhyati svargāpavarga-narakeṣv api tulyārtha-darśinaḥ

(Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.17.28)

[Devotees solely engaged in the devotional service of the Supreme Lord Nārāyaṇa never fear any condition of life. For them the heavenly planets, liberation and the hellish planets are all the same, for such devotees are interested only in the service of the Lord.]

bhukti-mukti-spr̥hā yāvat piśācī hṛdi vartate

tāvad bhakti-sukhas yatra katham abhyudayo bhavet

(Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu, Pūrva 2.22)

[How is it possible for the ocean of devotional happiness to appear in the heart as long as the witches of bhukti and mukti remain present there?]

The devotee does not have to travel from womb to womb. It is ridiculous, illogical and contrary to the scriptures to think that, compelled by past activities, the devotee will be born into the womb of a brāhmaṇa, experience the threefold material afflictions³ and then nullify his past!

Nitya-siddha-bhaktas or eternally liberated devotees such as Hanumān, Guhaka, Garuḍa, Ṭhākura Haridāsa, Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmi Prabhu, Śrīla Vāsudeva Datta Ṭhākura, Śrīla Uddhāraṇa Datta Ṭhākura, Śrī Jhaḍu Ṭhākura and others are universally considered to be the cream among devotees. To say that they would be forced to take birth as brāhmaṇas bound by the cycle of cause and effect like any other being within ordinary society would be like making noise rather than engaging in actual debate.

Tarkaratna: I am very pleased to have spoken with you. Indeed, you are a scholar. I am greatly impressed by your polite manners.

Mahopadeśaka: From your words, I gather that you have studied Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta like any other general reader. But I think that if you were to hear these nectarean words from the lips of a

Notes

3. The three material afflictions:

1. ādhyātmika: miseries caused by one's own body and mind.
2. ādhibhautika: miseries caused by other living entities.

3. ādhidaivika: miseries caused by the demigods or natural disasters.

A bona fide follower of Śrī Caitanyadeva, emanating devotion, you would dispel your erroneous notions and, therefore, you would be better equipped to understand Śrī Gauḍīya Maṭha. You have not directly heard about the Gauḍīya Maṭha; hearing from some aberrant person accounts for your misconceptions. You are both a respected elder and a scholar. Please carefully consider the purpose of Śrī Gauḍīya Maṭha. It endeavours solely to preach Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and advocates the establishment of brahminhood of the highest order. Śrī Gauḍīya Maṭha wishes to re-establish the original divinely ordained divisions of society (daiva-varṇāśrama- dharma).

Tarkaratna: I have read Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta with special attention. I have also heard about your organisation and have personally read about it.

Mahopadeśaka: Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya, an elderly and renowned scholar of Vedānta specialising in nyāya (logic) had at first judged Śrī Caitanyadeva to be a mahā-bhāgavata. However, when informed of the glories of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu from the lips of His devotee Gopīnātha, he came, by the grace of Śrī Caitanyadeva, to regard Him as the Supreme Lord Himself. What more can be said? At first, Sārvabhauma, thinking Śrī Caitanyadeva to be just a sādḥaka (seeker), made the Lord listen to Vedānta and endeavoured, as a well-wisher, to protect His sannyāsa-dharma! However, after speaking with the disciples of Mahāprabhu, Sārvabhauma came to realise that far from being an ordinary sannyāsī, Śrī Caitanyadeva was Supreme Knowledge Himself.

Tarkaratna: I feel affection and have great regard for your scholasticism and simplicity, but it seems that in spite of the fact that you are a brāhmaṇa by birth, you are misguided.

Mahopadeśaka: Both of us might have doubts as to who is in the wrong. Truth is one without a second, but one who is overcome by bhrama (illusion), pramāda (error), karaṇāpāṭava (imperfection of the senses), vipralipsā (cheating) and other defects understands untruth to be truth. I am compelled to say that, by birth, I am a śaukra-brāhmaṇa of the Rāḍhīya order, no less great than the brāhmaṇas of Bhaṭṭapallī. But pride of a divine nature will intoxicate me if I am able to put to my head a single grain of dust from the foot of a servant of a

servant of the śuddha-bhaktas of Śrī Gauḍīya Maṭha. No earthly heritage can compare to this honour. Let me ask you this: can anyone prove that our śaukra stream is flowing pure and unblemished from the time of Brahmā? If asked, can an honest and concise reply be given?

Tarkaratna: You yourself are proof of this because your gotra is intact.

Mahopadeśaka: It is the custom of parents who have no child of their own to resort to adoption. This process involves the changing of the gotra. Does the śaukra lineage then remain pure as it flows down through the following generations? Taking the preceding example into account; how can it be said that the gotra protects brahminhood? Please note that in the Mahābhārata, Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira tells Nahuṣa that men of all castes are able to impregnate women of any caste. This, of course, makes it difficult, if not impossible, to determine the caste of an individual:

*jātiratra mahā-sarpa manuṣyatve mahā-mate saṅkarāt sarva-varṇānām
duṣparīkṣyeti me matiḥ sarve sarvāsvapatyāni janayanti sadā narāḥ vān-
maithunam atho janma maraṇam ca samam nṛṇām*

(Mahābhārata, Vana Parva 18.31-32)

[Yudhiṣṭhira told Nahuṣa: “O noble-minded and great serpent, it is very difficult to ascertain one’s caste because of promiscuity among the four orders. This is my opinion. Men belonging to all castes beget offspring among women of all the different castes. And among men of different castes, speech, sexual intercourse, birth and death are common to all.”]

For this reason, the truth-loving sages have made the following statement:

na caitad vidmo brāhmaṇāḥ smo vayam abrāhmaṇā veti (from Śrī Nīlakaṇṭha’s commentary on the preceding verses)

[“We do not know whether we are brāhmaṇas or non-brāhmaṇas.”]

Tarkaratna: Even if such things occurred in ancient times, they cannot affect our concept of brahminhood, because we do not have concrete evidence of the past. Such things have not taken place in our presence.

Mahopadeśaka: Is there any written document that guarantees that such did not occur ten years ago, or that such events will not occur in the future?

Tarkaratna: I do not have a word of praise for brāhmaṇas who are immoral and who do not observe the rituals of Gāyatrī and sandhyā-vandanā. There are still sāgnika-brāhmaṇas today who follow the brahminical code.

Mahopadeśaka: Can you say who the present day sāgnika-brāhmaṇas (those who protect the sacred fire lit by Brahmā) in Bengal and the rest of India are?

Tarkaratna: Of course there are none in Bengal. Just recently there was one such brāhmaṇa in Kāśī, but he is now deceased.

Mahopadeśaka: There is no objection to addressing one or two individuals as brāhmaṇas, but they should not be considered to be on the same level as the spiritual brāhmaṇas. This is because Vaiṣṇavas, from the very onset, are not situated on the path of karma. They are, instead, situated in viṣṇu-bhakti, which is transcendental. Merits are higher than sin, and good works are certainly higher than evil deeds. But viṣṇu-bhakti transcends both merits and demerits, good and bad; it is non-material and is the natural function of the Self (ātmā).

Tarkaratna: I have heard that at Kāśī, you, the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, do not give recognition to the demigods and demigoddesses. You also do not go to see Lord Viśvanātha.

Mahopadeśaka: Śrī Gauḍīya Maṭha respects all the demigods and demigoddesses, but it objects to those who attempt to exploit these divinities to satisfy their own petty, mundane needs. Śrī Gauḍīya Maṭha says, instead, “Do not attempt to make the demigods and demigoddesses serve your own worldly

needs. Do not treat them as though they were your servants. Do not attempt to barter with them, but rather, pray to them to assist the Self in increasing its awareness of God, for this unfolding of the natural function of the Self is pleasing to the Supreme Lord Who is beyond mundane sense perception.”

I have lived with the monks of Gauḍīya Maṭha for quite a number of years, travelling with them on pilgrimages all over India. I have also met many scholars, brāhmaṇas, people who are westernised, and people who are quite ordinary. I have found that most of those who verbally accept the Vedas and call themselves Hindus are, in fact, quite ignorant of the real nature of worship of their particular worshipable deity. For example, they pray to Sūrya, the sun god, for dharma (religiosity and mundane conceptions of morality); to Gaṇeśa, the remover of obstacles, for artha (wealth); to Śakti, the personification of the material energy, for kāma (sense gratification); and to Rudra, the god of austerities, for mokṣa (liberation from material existence). Then there are others who consider Viṣṇu to be a demigod who is greater than the previous four—the fifth god as it were, and visualise Him in a temporary, non-eternal form. All are busy seeking dharma, artha, kāma or mokṣa for their own sense gratification. Nobody talks about gratifying the senses of that Adhokṣaja Supreme Absolute Truth. The Supreme Lord has supramundane senses. With His supramundane senses, He enjoys transcendental pastimes. This enjoyment of His is eternal. Each of us should seek to become the fuel in that enjoyment. None but Śrī Caitanyadeva refers to this. Viṣṇu is not a divinity Who exists to satisfy the lust and greed of man. Rather, He is the Supreme Enjoyer Himself. It is the eternal dharma of each of us to be an eternal servitor in that enjoyment. Many among us have often seen Śrī Viśvanātha at Kāśī and Śrī Bhuvaneśvara at Bhubaneswar. Who has said that we do not take darśana of Śrī Viśvanātha? It should be pointed out that our ācārya has given us the following instructions: “Do not get entangled in seeing the viśva (i.e., external outlook) when you go to see Viśvanātha. Do not wrongly think that by seeing bhūta and bhuvana (external appearances) you have viewed Bhuteśvara and Bhuvaneśvara.”

Tarkaratna: How does Śrī Gauḍīya Maṭha view Śrī Viśvanātha?

Mahopadeśaka: In pursuance of the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (12.13.16), we see Him as vaiṣṇavānāṁ yathā śambhuḥ: “Śambhu, or Lord Śiva, is the ideal Vaiṣṇava.” Under the guidance of our guru- varga, we offer praṇāma to Gopīśvara Mahādeva by chanting the verse vṛndāvanāvani-pate. We pray to Śrī Viśvanātha to withdraw His tāmasika Rudra form (meant for those who are

covered by the mode of ignorance) and instead, to manifest Himself as Śrī Kṛṣṇa's most beloved and the eternal spiritual master of the whole world. We perform worship of that eternal form.

Tarkaratna: Have you accepted the varṇāśrama-dharma of the scriptures?

Mahopadeśaka: It is none other than Śrī Gauḍīya Maṭha that is promoting the re-establishment of daiva-varṇāśrama-dharma. Śrī Caitanyadeva's conception of dharma is closely aligned with that of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. In that literature it is said:

*yasya yal lakṣaṇam proktaṁ puṁso varṇābhivyañjakam yad anyatrāpi dṛśyeta
tat tenaiva vinirdiśet*

(Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.11.35)

There are certain characteristics that typify a person's varṇa (caste). Apart from one's birth caste, these characteristics are the signs that contribute to the correct identification of the varṇa of an individual. This is because the varṇa cannot be ascertained by the jāti (birth-caste) alone. (In other words, if a person born in a low caste displays the characteristics of a higher caste, or vice versa, then that person's actual varṇa is determined on the basis of the characteristics he displays. For example, if one born in a vaiśya family displays the characteristics of a brāhmaṇa, then he should be accepted as a brāhmaṇa.)

To further our understanding, we can look to the words of that crest jewel of brāhmaṇas, Jagadguru Śrīdhara Svāmipāda. Śrī Caitanyadeva considered the commentaries of Śrīdhara Svāmipāda to be infallible. He also thought of him as His guru. Śrīdhara Svāmipāda has offered the subsequent explanation to the above verse in his Bhāvārtha-dīpikā:

*śamādhir eva brāhmaṇādi-vyavahāro mukhyo na jāti-mātrād ity āha yasyeti.
yad yadi anyatra varṇāntare 'pi dṛśyeta tad varṇāntaram tenaiva lakṣaṇa-*

nimitenaiva varṇena vinirdiśet na tu jāti-nimittenety arthaḥ

(Commentary on Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.11.35)

The primary method of judging the brahminhood of a person is to observe within him the presence of the qualities of self- restraint, discipline, knowledge, etc. Usually, birth is taken to be an indication, but this is not always the case. The *yasya yal lakṣaṇam* verse (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.11.35) confirms this. It is not a fact that because one is born in a brāhmaṇa family, one is automatically a brāhmaṇa. He has a better chance to become a brāhmaṇa, but unless he meets all the brahminical qualifications, he cannot be accepted as such. On the other hand, if the brahminical qualifications are found in the person of a śūdra, he should immediately be accepted as a brāhmaṇa. The Śrīmad- Bhāgavatam has classified varṇa by dint of birth as being cyuta- gotra (a fallible lineage), but Vaiṣṇavas as belonging to the acyuta- gotra (infallible lineage). Vaiṣṇavahood has nothing to do with birth. The circle of birth arises from falldown and lapse. A glorious past life might facilitate one's appearance in a higher caste, but the actions of this present life might very well lead to a subsequent birth in the womb of a low-born person, or even an animal, bird or insect. One can even fall down in various ways in the present life. Quite unlike the previous scenarios, Vaiṣṇavahood is eternal and infallible. It has to do with the state of consciousness of the Self and has no connection with insentient matter. It is clearly perceivable to all that whatever is born is subject to decay and destruction. The material body consists of stuff that is low and impure:

jātasya hi dhruvo mṛtyur dhruvaṁ janma mṛtasya ca (Bhagavad-gītā 2.27)

[One who has taken his birth is sure to die, and after death one is sure to take birth again.]

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam has also condemned this cycle of action and reaction:

*karmanām pariṇāmitvād ā-viriñcyād amaṅgalam vipaścin naśvaram paśyed
adr̥ṣtam api dṛṣṭa-vat*

(Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.19.18)

Scholars should understand that past merit might very well take one all the way up to Brahmaloḥa, but even this achievement is subject to the laws of karma and is ultimately temporary. Śrīmad- Bhāgavatam has repeatedly discussed this (in ślokaṣ 5.4.12, 9.17.3, 9.20.1 and elsewhere) and has established that one's works and activities are more accurate pointers to the identification of varṇa than one's birth. The kṣatriyaṣ R̥ṣabhadeva and Devadatta were the parents of one hundred sons. Among them, Bharata became the king of Bhārata-varṣa, and nine of his brothers became kings of nine other varṣaṣ (countries). Nine other sons named Kavi, Havi, etc., became the Navayogendras—renowned mahā-bhāgavata Vaiṣṇavaṣ. The remaining eighty-one became brāhmaṇaṣ. In the Puru dynasty, many brahmarṣiṣ may be found. Kṣatravṛddha was the son of King Āyu belonging to the lunar dynasty. In that family, Śaunaka attained brahminhood and became a sage. In this way, there are many hundreds of examples to be found in the Śrīmad- Bhāgavatam. From this great literature, we know that in the ancient age of Satya-yuga, there were no such divisions as brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiśya and śūdra. From the Tretā-yuga, distinctions came to be made based upon guṇa-karma (one's qualities and work or action). Guṇa-karma is the real basis of deciding a person's varṇa. Standing by itself, the word varṇa is rendered meaningless. It is guṇa or quality that determines our life both here and hereafter:

*ādau kṛta-yuge varṇo nṛṇām haṁsa iti smṛtaḥ kṛta-kṛtyāḥ prajā jātyā tasmāt
kṛta-yugaṁ viduḥ tretā-mukhe mahā-bhāga prāṇān me hṛdayāt trayī vidyā
prādurabhūt tasyā aham āsaṁ tri-vṛṇ makhaḥ vipra-kṣatriya-viṭ-śūdrā mukha-
bāhūru-pāda-jāḥ vairājāt puruṣāj jātā*

ya ātmācāra-lakṣaṇāḥ (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 11.17.10, 12 and 13)

[Lord Kṛṣṇa to Uddhava: “In the beginning, in Satya-yuga, there is only one

social class, called haṁsa, to which all human beings belong. In that age all people are unalloyed devotees of the Lord from birth, and thus learned scholars call this first age Kṛta- yuga, or the age in which all religious duties are perfectly fulfilled. O greatly fortunate one, at the beginning of Tretā-yuga, Vedic knowledge appeared from My heart, which is the abode of the air of life, in three divisions—as Ṛg, Sāma and Yajur. Then from that knowledge I appeared as threefold sacrifice. In Tretā-yuga the four varṇas were manifested from the universal form of the Supreme Lord. The brāhmaṇas appeared from the Lord's face, the kṣatriyas from the Lord's arms, the vaiśyas from the Lord's thighs and the śūdras from the legs of that mighty form. Each varṇa was recognized by its particular duties and behavior.”]

Tarkaratna: You come from a brāhmaṇa family. I hold affection for you because you are a brāhmaṇa.

Mahopadeśaka: Affection toward one's kith and kin is common in all conditioned living beings. The scriptures do not point to birth alone as a means of determining brahminhood. Primarily, it is determined by one's qualities. You know of the mantra of the Vajra-sūcikopaniṣad commented upon by Śankarācārya. What is said in that śruti?

tarhi jātir brāhmaṇa iti cet tan na tatra jāty-antara-jantuṣu aneka-jāti-sambhavā maharṣayo bahavaḥ santi. ṛṣyaśṛṅgo mṛgaḥ. kauśikaḥ kuśāt. jāmbuko jambukāt. vālmīko valmīkāt. vyāsaḥ kaivarta-kanyāyām. śāśa-prṣṭhāt gautamaḥ. vaśiṣṭhaḥ ūrvaśyām. agastyah kalase jāta iti śrutatvāt. eteṣāṃ jātyā vināpy agre jñāna-pratipāditā ṛṣayo bahavaḥ santi. tasmān na jātiḥ brāhmaṇa iti.

(Vajra-sūcika Upaniṣad 5)

[Can one become a brāhmaṇa by dint of birth alone? Definitely not! There exist incidents of maharṣis manifesting themselves from various other antecedents and varieties of parentage. We have heard that Ṛṣyaśṛṅga was born from a deer, Kauśika from kuśa grass, Jāmbūka from a fox, and Vālmīki from an ant-hill. Vyāsa was the son of a fisherwoman, Gautama came from a rabbit, Vasiṣṭha from the celestial prostitute Urvaśi, and Agastya from a pot. There are innumerable other sages and ṛṣis who were not brāhmaṇas by birth. From this, it

is understood that brahminhood is not determined by birth alone.]

The esteemed Vedāntācārya Jayatīrtha of the Śrīman Madhva- sampradāya quotes the logic of “the scorpion and the rice” (vṛścika- tāṇḍulī-nyāya) in his commentary entitled Śruta-prakāśikā:

brāhmaṇād eva brāhmaṇa iti niyamasya

kvacid anyathātvopapatte vṛścika-tāṇḍulīyakādi-vad iti.

Male and female scorpions unite to give birth to another scorpion, but sometimes, scorpions are born from rice. Vasiṣṭha, Agastya, Ṛṣyaśṛṅga, Vyāsadeva and others were not brāhmaṇas in the general sense. Therefore, both factors of qualities and birth should be the basis in deciding a person’s varṇa. The yasya yal lakṣaṇaṁ proktaṁ verse in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (7.11.35) reiterates the previous information.

Concluding words

Paramārtha: The Supreme goal of life

Everyone observes dharma. Dharma means one’s natural inclination. We are all compelled to obey the dharma of our own bodies. Since the body decomposes, the dharma of the body is temporary and of an inferior nature, being subject to decay and death. The causal principle behind the body is the mind, and the mind exists for a longer span of time than the body. Although in a relative sense, the mind exists longer than the body, it too is restless. The cause behind both the body and the mind is buddhi (intelligence), or ātmā. If there were no intelligence

present, the mind would have nothing on which to ruminate. Thus, the dharma of the body, mind and ātmā are in an ascending order. There are, however, many who do not believe in the dharma of the ātmā. There are many who stubbornly declare that they do not believe in dharma at all. This is incorrect thinking. All have to obey dharma, but instead of true dharma, they follow false dharma. The need for wealth (artha) is not unknown to anyone, but there are few who realise the need for paramārtha, the supreme goal of life.

yasmin vijñāte sarvam idaṁ vijñātaṁ bhavati yasmin prāpte sarvam idaṁ prāptaṁ bhavati tad vijijñāsasva tad eva brahma

(Upaniṣads)

“Inquire into that upon knowing which, nothing further remains to be known. Try to achieve that upon gaining which, nothing further remains to be gained.”

yaṁ labdhvā cāparam lābhaṁ manyate nādhikaṁ tataḥ yasmin sthito na duḥkhena guruṇāpi vicālyate

(Bhagavad-gītā 6.22)

“Upon gaining this, one thinks there is no greater gain. Being situated in such a position, one is never shaken, even in the midst of greatest difficulty.” That Complete Reality is bhagavat-tattva (the Supreme Lord). That is why He is known as Paramārtha. A sign saying that a place is a maṭha or a monastery does not make it so. A maṭha is a place where a striving for paramārtha reigns. The building itself is not the maṭha. For it to qualify as one, there must be spiritual seekers and spiritual teachers. That place wherein the gods are worshipped is called a temple. A maṭha is not just a temple. It is a centre for learning about and seeking paramārtha. Our Gurudeva founded many such maṭhas. Śrī Saṅkarācārya, Śrī Rāmānujācārya, Śrī Madhvācārya and others also set up many maṭhas. In later times, Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu and His associates did

not establish any maṭhas at all. However, Śrīman Mahāprabhu had given four tasks to His disciples:

1. The dissemination of the Holy Name.
2. The compilation of devotional scriptures.
3. The rediscovery and renovation of lost pilgrimage sites.
4. The service of the Lord manifested in His Holy Deity Forms (Śrī Vighraha).

The six Gosvāmīs performed the above four duties with notable credit. In Vṛndāvana, each Gosvāmī has duly served the Śrī Vighrahas.

mahāprabhura bhakta-gaṇera vairāgya pradhāna

yāhā dekhi' prīta hana gaura-bhagavān

(Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Antya-līlā 6.220)

Renunciation is the basic principle sustaining the lives of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's devotees. On seeing their renunciation, Śrī Gaura Bhagavān is extremely satisfied.

None of Mahāprabhu's devotees took the vows of sannyāsa, but they took on the attire of the paramahansa (topmost swan- like devotee). Being transcendental to the varṇāśrama system, this position of paramahansa is the greatest. However, when the paramahansa attire was insulted and abused by many who, irrespective of their high or low worth, took it on and indulged in perversions, and when the symbol of the Gosvāmīs came to be treated with disrespect, our Gurudeva became disinclined to adopt the attire of the paramahansa. Knowing himself to be a part of the classification of varṇāśrama, he assumed the robes of a monk. By

his own example, Gurudeva illustrated that it is better to accept the divisions of varṇāśrama rather than cause greater harm by abusing the paramahaṁsa attire. To serve the paramahaṁsa Vaiṣṇavas, Gurudeva took the vows of tridaṇḍa-sannyāsa. Although our Gurudeva is the best among the best of the paramahaṁsas, he nonetheless included himself in the bonds of rules and codes of conduct, and humbly accepted the sannyāsa- āśrama. Each and every step an ācārya takes is for the welfare of the world. It is a case of extreme humility when one who is above the three material qualities (guṇas) allows himself to enter the world of defining and limiting attributes. The tridaṇḍa or three staffs stand for the body, mind and speech. They indicate that the body will not be engaged in anything temporal, but instead, will be utilised only for those things that pertain to Kṛṣṇa. The mind will only contemplate Kṛṣṇa and the speech will only be about Kṛṣṇa. The tridaṇḍi is one who accepts these three things. My body, mind and tongue (speech) are restless, but nevertheless, I have resolved to employ them only in the work of and for Kṛṣṇa, just as the brāhmaṇa of Avanti did while taking the oath of tridaṇḍa- sannyāsa as described in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (11.23.29).

The robe of the tridaṇḍi is the holiest of attires. Its worship has been illustrated in smṛti, the tradition of the smārtas. At the time of accepting the vows of tridaṇḍa-sannyāsa, the following hymn of the tridaṇḍi mendicants is chanted:

*devatā-pratimāṁ dṛṣṭvā yatim caiva tridaṇḍinam namaskāraṁ na kuryād yaḥ
prāyaścittīyate naraḥ*

(smṛti-vākya)

[One who does not offer respect to the Supreme Lord, to His Deity in the temple or to a tridaṇḍi-sannyāsī must undergo prāyaścitta (atonement).]

It was Rāvaṇa who took advantage of the reverence shown to the tridaṇḍi attire and, revealing his contempt for it, abducted Sītā. Rāvaṇa had done this quite openly, but there are others who abduct on the sly.

The vision of the true disciple is ever filled with the greatness of the guru. Differences in behaviour of disciples arise due to differences in their

relationships and capabilities. The arrival of devotees at the home of the gr̥hastha and the vibrations of kṛṣṇa-kathā bring auspiciousness for the householder. The host of this program has brought the Vaiṣṇavas here and has served the Vaiṣṇavas. The fires of Vaiṣṇava homa (sacrifice) have been lit. From this, there will surely come all that is good and holy. Those who feel the need for Bhagavān will definitely seek out the company of devotees:

bhaktis tu bhagavad-bhakta- saṅgena parijāyate

sat-saṅgaḥ prāpyate pumbhiḥ sukr̥taiḥ pūrva-saṅcitaiḥ

(Bṛhan-nāradya Purāṇa 4.33, Hari-bhakti-vilāsa 10.279)

“Devotion is born out of association with devotees of the Lord. Contact with such saintly persons is given to those who have accumulated pious merit (sukṛti) in previous lifetimes.”

A household in which devotees do not gather is like a dark well. The scriptures advise us to give up such a place of falldown of the soul. In this context, the Seventh Canto of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, containing the advice of Prahāda Mahārāja, is to be perused:

tat sādhu manye 'sura-varya dehinām sadā samudvigna-dhiyām asad-grahāt hitvātma pātaṁ gr̥ham andha-kūpaṁ vanam gato yad dharim āśrayeta (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 7.5.5)

“O best of the asuras, King of the demons, any person who has accepted a temporary body and temporary household life is certainly embarrassed by anxiety because of having fallen into a dark well where there is no water but only suffering. One should give up this position, go to the forest and take shelter of the Supreme Lord.”

Have I made a mistake?

An essay originally penned in 1966; translated from Śrī Caitanya-vāṇī.

My Doubt

A doubt occasionally arises in my heart. I think, “Have I made a mistake in accepting the shelter of the lotus feet of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas?” It certainly seems so. I appear to have made a mistake in taking up bhajana, in accepting the shelter of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas and, specifically, in taking refuge of the Gauḍīya Maṭha and dedicating all my senses to serving in the Maṭha.

Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas are not big-hearted. When we perform bhajana under their shelter, we are controlled by so many rules and regulations. If I were to take refuge of some other sampradāya where there is no concern for offences such as vaiṣṇava-aparādha, nāma- aparādha or dhāma-aparādha, I would feel no such hindrance or botheration. I would not be obliged to develop exclusive devotion for a particular object of worship (such as Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa), nor would my eating habits be curtailed. In the Maṭha, issues like vaiṣṇava-aparādha are raised, and it often impedes my unrestricted sense enjoyment, lawless gossiping and other whimsical activities. It would therefore be better for me to live outside the Maṭha than be governed by such restraints.

Sometimes I even think it would be best for me to abandon the shelter of such a controlling gurudeva and to accept the mantra elsewhere, having no such rules and regulations to follow. Thus, I occasionally contemplate severing my ties with the Gauḍīya Maṭha completely. What stops me however, is the thought that if people were to find out that I had broken my connection with Śrī Guru, it could jeopardise my prestige and position.

Discipline and Deceit

The Vaiṣṇavas of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha are one- pointedly engaged in worshiping Śrī Gaurāṅgadeva and Śrī Śrī Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa, under the guidance of Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmīpāda and the best among his followers, namely, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī. Kṛṣṇa-prema is their only goal and their only practice. There is no absence of affection or devotion in the sādhana of the servants of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha. Hence, they will never support any endeavor that is unfavorable to the cultivation of affection for Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

What auspiciousness can sādhana bring if it cannot offer its practitioner any way to attain his cherished goal quickly, or if it cannot even offer him any certainty that he will realise his worshipable deity at all? This type of sādhana when propagated tends only to attract followers. For those content to pass their lives without purpose or restriction, what use is there to accept the lotus feet of a sad-guru, a transcendental teacher? But those who can see their own faults and anarthas, and try to become free of them, develop an urge to become qualified to taste the bliss of prema for Bhagavān. Only they can remain in the shelter of saintly devotees endowed with this prema. They can experience the happiness of being engaged in service to Bhagavān by living under the guidance of such one-pointed devotees and following their instructions. This involves subduing their senses and abstaining from whimsical activities.

Those who make a show of accepting the shelter of the lotus feet of Śrī Guru simply deceive themselves; they pretend to be self- controlled and reformed but internally maintain their previous bad impressions, and especially the tendency to strive to gather followers. In other words, they recruit followers on the pretext of accepting the shelter of Śrī Guru with the aim of fulfilling their selfish ends through their so-called disciples. The attempts of such arrogant and duplicitous people to attain auspiciousness are endlessly frustrated.

To be a disciple means to be disciplined, or controlled. If a person outwardly accepts the shelter of Śrī Guru but arrogantly maintains the attitude that he knows best about his spiritual life, then he is but a cheater—deceiving both himself and others. Pure Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas are most magnanimous and bestow the highest auspiciousness. If we can become eligible to understand even a single aspect of their exemplary lives we will become attached to sādhanabhajana and be filled with jubilation and devotion.

Bhakti Lies Beyond Renunciation

Those who possess Kṛṣṇa-prema are neither enjoyers nor renunciants. They are not karmīs, fruitive workers; neither are they jñānīs, persons cultivating knowledge of the impersonal Brahman. Those who perform activities opposed to scriptural injunctions honor karmīs who abide by scriptural injunctions, and when karmīs who are eager to enjoy the results of their endeavors see the external renunciation of jñānīs and renunciants, they may be attracted to them. However, those who hanker for bhagavat- prema disregard both of these paths. They are attracted only by behavior that nurtures the cultivation of Kṛṣṇa-prema.

Someone who is not aspiring for prema for Bhagavān will perceive only enjoyment or renunciation in the behavior of the devotees. If he takes shelter of them upon observing their external renunciation, he may for a while consider himself blessed to be in their company. Kṛṣṇa-prema, however, cannot be attained by external renunciation. Unless one has faith grounded in philosophical truth (tattvika śraddhā), or has affection for the svarūpa of Śrī Bhagavān, he cannot become attracted to the behavior of Bhagavān's bhaktas. The characteristic of such one- pointed devotees is that directly or indirectly they only cultivate love for Śrī Kṛṣṇa:

*anyābhilāṣitā-śūnyam jñāna-karmādy-anāvṛtam ānukūlyena kṛṣṇānu śīlanam
bhaktir-uttamā*

(Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu 1.1.11)

“The cultivation of activities that are meant exclusively for the pleasure of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, or in other words, the uninterrupted flow of service to Śrī Kṛṣṇa performed through all endeavors of the body, mind and speech as well as through the expression of various spiritual sentiments (bhāvas) not covered by jñāna (knowledge aimed at impersonal liberation) and/or karma (reward- seeking activity), and which is devoid of all desires other than the aspiration to bring

happiness to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, is called *uttama- bhakti*—pure devotional service.”

One must deliberate upon this verse. The activities of a Kṛṣṇa- bhakta, such as establishing a *maṭha* (spiritual institution), constructing a temple, meeting with materialistic or aristocratic people, hosting festivals with pomp and grandeur and giving instructions to ignorant or faithless people, are all *śuddha- bhakti*. To serve Bhagavān and the bhaktas one may supervise the construction of a temple or the house of a devotee, collect materials, purchase supplies and accept the undignified propensity to beg. Such activities are supremely pleasurable and nourish one’s bhakti. However, those same activities bind one to this material world if they are performed with the aim of gratifying one’s senses, accumulating wealth, women and fame or attaining dharma, artha, kāma or mokṣa.

What Is True Renunciation?

kuṣṭhi-viprera ramaṇī pativratā śiromaṇi pati lāgi kailā veśyāra sevā

stambhila sūryera gati jīyāila mṛta pati tuṣṭa kaila mukhya tina devā

(Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Antya-līlā 20.57)

“The wife of a brāhmaṇa suffering from leprosy showed herself to be the topmost of chaste women by serving a prostitute to satisfy her husband. She thus halted the movement of the sun, brought her dead husband back to life and satisfied Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśvara.”

We should consider this account in the light of our discussion. The chaste brāhmaṇa wife’s service to a lowly prostitute in the sincere endeavor to please her husband enhanced her glory. She thus became worshipable for the entire world. What is more, she became very dear to Śrī Bhagavān. If however, she had performed this service for her own sense pleasure, or for dharma, artha, kāma or mokṣa, it would have been reprehensible in every respect. In this world, renunciation means to relinquish the objects of one’s attachment. But can

ceasing to take foods that merely aggravate a disease, for instance, be considered renunciation? Abstaining from foodstuffs that destroy good health and instead accepting foods that increase longevity can hardly be celebrated as a great act of renunciation. Thus, it is hard to see how the act of renouncing one's father, mother, relatives, friends, wealth, occupation, business or worldly duties performed to gain material comforts, can in itself be glorious. Only when a person renounces the objects of his mundane pleasure for the pleasure of the Supreme Entity Śrī Bhagavān, expecting no sense enjoyment in return, can his renunciation be considered actual renunciation. In other words, true renunciation entails not striving for dharma, artha, kāma or mokṣa, or for wealth, women and adoration.

Ordinarily, it is considered irreligious to forsake duties that the scriptures prescribe for one's *svaṛṇa* and *dāśrama*, but if these duties are discarded for the pleasure and satisfaction of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is the cause of all causes and the bestower of supreme bliss, then and only then is such renunciation honorable. Indeed, such renunciation, which benefits everyone, is to be revered. To renounce endeavors for sense gratification—that is, endeavors in one's search for happiness in this world or in the next—is courageous and glorious. But the topmost renunciation is to abandon everything, even one's independent will and desires, for the pleasure of Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His one-pointed devotees.

Renouncing the mind's propensity for independence, or in other words, the sacrifice of one's very self, is far superior to renouncing inert and temporary things. The glory of one's renunciation lies truly in the glory of the object of such sacrifice. Śrī Bhagavān and His *premī-bhaktas* possess unlimited glories and therefore to renounce for their pleasure is supremely noble. Such renunciation is incomparable because it increases the happiness of all living entities by reawakening their relationship with Śrī Bhagavān. It does not admit even the slightest scent of distress. Rather, the renunciant feels increasingly happy at every step. It can therefore be concluded that such renunciation bestows bliss in every respect and is highly esteemed.

Fruitive workers, or *karmīs*, make sacrifices and perform austerity with the hope of attaining increased mundane sense pleasure in the future. Such renunciation is therefore meager and does not bestow complete happiness. *Jñānīs*, who aspire for impersonal Brahman realisation, make sacrifices and perform austerity to dispel their own suffering. Their renunciation also does not bestow full happiness.

The sacrifices and austerities of Kṛṣṇa's bhaktas however, are meant exclusively for the pleasure of Śrī Hari. Since Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the cause of all causes, such renunciation bestows true welfare upon the bhakta and upon others. Therefore, Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas greatly honor those activities that promote love of Bhagavān while rejecting activities that hinder it. In this sādhana any sense enjoyment and renunciation that is favorable to bhakti is highly regarded. Yet bhaktas are not attracted to sense enjoyment and renunciation in their own right. They are attracted to love for Bhagavān and His devotees. They have no independent or whimsical desire to enjoy or renounce. Yukta-vairāgya, renunciation for the pleasure of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, is their only sādhana. Without understanding bhajana- rahasya, the secrets of bhajana, one will become bewildered by what sense enjoyment is and what renunciation is. Both are impediments in the sādhanaka's cultivation of love for Bhagavān.

Don't Waste a Moment

Those who have realised that this human life offers an invaluable opportunity to work toward attaining the supreme goal, value every moment of it. They are unwilling to waste even an instant in any other endeavor. They know that living entities in other species of life do not have the facility or good fortune to make progress toward the supreme goal and, accordingly, they see no value in living their lives in the manner of the lower species. Hence, upon attaining this extremely rare human life and on top of that, attaining the fortune to associate with sādhus (saints) and developing śraddhā for the supreme goal, they cannot quietly squander a single moment of their lives. Rather, they will accept only what is favourable to the cultivation of affection for Śrī Kṛṣṇa and will reject all activities that are unfavorable to it.

As such, the devotees of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha instruct the world to engage only in those practices that are righteous and favorable to the cultivation of Kṛṣṇa-prema and to reject unrighteous activities that impede it. Moreover, they never indulge in violence or envy, as this hinders the cultivation of prema.

My Doubt Resolved

Thus, if I am genuinely searching for Kṛṣṇa-prema, I have not after all made any mistake in accepting the shelter of the lotus feet of pure Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas. Such Vaiṣṇavas will not fuel our desire for dharma, artha, kāma and mokṣa or our hankering for wealth, women and adoration. The purpose of the Maṭha is to help us become free from these anarthas and attain Kṛṣṇa-prema. By taking shelter of the lotus feet of pure Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas in the Gauḍīya Maṭha, beggars for Kṛṣṇa-prema become qualified to attain their greatest welfare. Moreover, they receive the opportunity to achieve the highest ideal of magnanimity and to ascend to the topmost level of pure vairāgya, renunciation. This is my unshakable conviction. One cannot be deviated from attaining bhagavat-prema in due course, unless one becomes a severe offender.

One day, by the mercy of Śrīla Prabhupāda, the world will profusely glorify and worship the Śrī Sarasvata Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas (that is, Śrīla Prabhupāda's followers). They alone are able to establish the highest ideal of benevolence in the world. Victory will certainly belong to the devotees of the Gauḍīya Maṭha, or those who have taken shelter of the lotus feet of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas. Therefore, I have not made a mistake in accepting the shelter of the lotus feet of pure Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas. Rather, I have whole-heartedly embraced the good fortune of attaining my highest welfare, and thus am truly blessed.

I want to say to you...

A hand-written composition

One by one, the Vaiṣṇavas of yore have departed from this world, thereby indicating to us to be more attentive in our search for our ultimate goal of life (paramārtha). Our lifespan is extremely limited and yet, in spite of having the opportunity, facility, and knowledge of the path to Śrī Kṛṣṇa's Holy Feet, we are not endeavouring to fully immerse ourselves in bhajana. Under the impressions of many, many past lives we have forgotten our own identity. Instead, this body

and all that is related to it by māyā has come to be our own and everything. The result of this is that we have deprived ourselves of the attainment of our actual dearest Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the embodiment of all delightful mellows (akhila-rasāmṛta-mūrti).

Without transforming the ego, it is not possible to begin the search for Śrī Kṛṣṇa. What the mundane ego prompts us to do will inevitably be mundane and gross. Without transcending this barrier of māyā, the search for paramārtha cannot begin. When one understands his origin in Vaikuṇṭha—the spiritual kingdom transcendental to māyā—then automatically, one’s greed for and sense of habitual duty towards the objects of the material world disappear. “I am an eternal servitor of Śrī Bhagavān”—when this awareness awakens, then love for Śrī Kṛṣṇa, His personal associates, and anything connected with Śrī Kṛṣṇa automatically surges forth. To serve Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His devotees, knowing one’s relationship with Them (sambandha-jñāna), is known as hari- bhajana. Prior to the awakening of pure sambandha-jñāna, there may be mixed devotion (miśra-bhakti), such as offering all results of one’s activities etc., but there cannot be pure devotion (śuddha- bhakti). Śuddha-bhakti might be extremely rare, but yet, that is our goal. One may find many enchanting things in the orchard of the fruitive workers (karma-kāṇḍīs), but none of them will be of use in getting Śrī Kṛṣṇa. The real fact is that without being established in knowledge of the Self (ātmā), one cannot practice actual vaikuṇṭha-bhajana. It would be foolish to waste this precious human birth in chasing the mundane and ordinary under the regular course of affairs. In fact, we should make the best use of a bad bargain.

I am pleased to hear that you are engaged in only taking the Name of Śrī Hari. The scriptures, as well as our predecessor ācāryas, have advised us to give up karma (fruitive activity), jñāna (knowledge), yoga (meditation), tyāga (renunciation), vrata (accepting vows) and tapasyā (practising austerities), and have advised us to practice only harināma:

harer nāma harer nāma harer nāmaiva kevalam kalau nāsty eva nāsty eva nāsty eva gatir anyathā

(Bṛhad-nāradya Purāṇa 38.126)

“In this age of Kali there is no alternative, there is no alternative, there is no

alternative for spiritual progress other than the Holy Name, the Holy Name, the Holy Name of the Lord.”

Therefore, forgetting all fascination for any other type of discipline and understanding that there is no difference between the Name and the Named, chant the Holy Name. There is no sādhana greater than this. No other way will yield faster results. Nāma-bhajana is the topmost among the thousands of limbs of devotion and is the essence of the teachings of Śrī Caitanyadeva. Pretending to call out to Bhagavān Śrī Hari while having somebody or something else in mind does not constitute nāma-bhajana. On the contrary, it is an offence unto the Lotus Feet of the Holy Name. I shall consider myself fortunate if both of you lovingly continue your nāma-bhajana and worship of the Supreme Lord.

When we begin Nama-bhajana, the agents of māyā try to create problems and obstacles in our spiritual progress. But the devotee of Śrī Bhagavān is not the least bit disturbed by this. In fact, all these obstacles propel his devotion and devotional fame to greater heights. All potencies originate from one source which is real (vāstava) and true (satya). Therefore, how can any potency, including the material potency of that vāstava-vastu, the Supreme Controller, harm those who are working only out of love for Him? Ignorant persons, enmeshed as they are in worldly objects, always undergo suffering in the material world and are continuously in a state of fear. But the pure devotee or the intelligent person knows that Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the Supreme Controller. This is why those who worship Śrī Kṛṣṇa never fear anything or anyone, as there could never be any cause for them to fear. Māyā enters the heart of the jīva and increases suffering, fear and lamentation born of ignorance in the same proportion as the separation that there is between the jīva and Śrī Kṛṣṇa. There is a big difference between showbottle or recreational spirituality and actual kṛṣṇa-bhakti. Dovetailing all of one’s desires with the desires of Śrī Kṛṣṇa is known as śuddha-bhakti. We must endeavour for this. When you belong to Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Śrī Kṛṣṇa will also belong to you.

You have to be vigilant, making sure you are not diverted due to attachment to material and temporary religious practices. If you analyse in detail the characters of those who try to obstruct you in your path of hari-bhajana, you will find that they are leading their lives deeply engrossed in activities that are totally averse to Śrī Kṛṣṇa. Moreover, the views of such enslaved souls and those of pure devotees can never be similar. The difference in their views is natural and must necessarily be there. But the wise and clever devotee, keeping intact his devotion

to bhakti, does not withdraw from usual interaction with the world around him. Only those activities that are against bhakti must be avoided. There is no need to abandon material and social activities that are not averse to śuddha-bhakti. I do not see why householder devotees should give up their routine social activities. You should cooperate with or help your relatives at the time of functions such as marriages and so on. However, eating non-vegetarian food and remnants of food offered to demigods is strictly prohibited.

If no one from your family or from the society you live in were highly educated, then taking this plea, would you also wish to remain uneducated? Similar is the case with spiritual knowledge. No wise man on this planet will advise you to keep yourself devoid of such invaluable spiritual knowledge. Rather, you will be advised by any well-wisher to set a high standard from which the others will benefit. For the sake of the temporal, do not harm your actual, spiritual interest (paramārtha). Consider this carefully: How much can you flatter others for the sake of material comforts? How much will you benefit and for how long? What good will it do to either of you? A human being may die at any moment. How much will your sympathy towards such people benefit them after your death and vice versa? Remember that at the time of our death, all objects related to the body will be left behind and we will have to go far away. Do not ever be concerned about pleasing the ordinary conditioned souls who cannot differentiate between good and bad, who are attached to lust, anger and greed, and enveloped by bad habits. Śrī Bhagavān is the protector and maintainer of all. Do not waste your invaluable and tender devotional life blindly following some helpless and hapless foolish people who are bereft of their own eternal welfare.

Without enthusiasm, no progress can be made in any field. With great enthusiasm, call out to Śrī Bhagavān as much as you can. Chant the mahā-mantra⁴ on your beads with concentration and devotion. Knowing yourself to be the property of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, you will have no desire to gratify the senses of others.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the embodiment of all transcendental delightful mellows (akhilarasāmṛta-mūrti). He is therefore competent to satisfy the prayers of devotees of any of the different mellows. Those who do not have any ulterior motive in their hari-bhajana will get the opportunity to fully savour the Form of the Supreme Lord filled with transcendental mellows. In whichever mellow a devotee serves Him, Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa will reciprocate accordingly⁵. Bhagavān can only be attained by adopting the devotional path because only devotion is competent to do so. For this to happen, we will have to sacrifice all our material comforts and

material inclinations. It is useless to sacrifice one's own self—body, mind and speech—for the happiness of worldly people who are averse to Bhagavān. It will only be appropriate to offer the gift of sacrifice to the All-Powerful Bhagavān Śrī Kṛṣṇa, Who is All-Existence, All- Knowledge and All-Bliss. Go on chanting the Holy Name of the Supreme Lord without apprehension. He will definitely absolve you of all your anarthas⁶.

Notes:

4. The mahā-mantra: Hare Kṛṣṇa, Hare Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa, Hare Hare/
Hare Rāma, Hare Rāma, Rāma Rāma, Hare Hare.

5. The five principal mellows are:

1. Neutrality (śānta-rasa).
2. Servitude (dāsyā-rasa).
3. Friendship (sakhya-rasa).
4. Parenthood (vātsalya-rasa).
5. Consortship (mādhurya-rasa).

6. The four anarthas are:

1. Misconception of self (svarūpa-bhrama).
2. Evil non-eternal desires (asat-tṛṣṇā).
3. Propensity to commit offence (aparādha).

4. Weakness of heart (hṛdaya-daurbalya).

About the author

One of the shining luminaries of the Gauḍīya sky, Śrīla Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Gosvāmī Mahārāja was an intimate disciple of Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda. Śrīla Mādhava Mahārāja became renowned for his intense devotion, deep humility and brilliance in spreading the mission of his divine master. Indeed, Śrīla Prabhupāda used to refer to him as “a preacher of volcanic energy.”

Revered Śrīla Bhakti Dayita Mādhava Gosvāmī Mahārāja appeared in this world on 18 November 1904 (Utthāna-Ekādaśī tithi) on the disappearance day of Śrīla Gaurakiśora dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja at Kāñcanapāḍā-dhāma (district Faridpur, now in Bangladesh). Extraordinary saintly qualities were manifested in him from a very early age. He was adored by all and was a universally accepted leader in every sphere. His teachers at school were astonished to hear profound words of wisdom from him. At a young age, he was graced by the sage Śrī Nārada Muni who came to him in a dream. After that, he undertook a spiritual journey to the Himalayan Mountains. In his search, guided by a divine message, he returned from the Himalayas and in 1925, met his Gurudeva, His Divine Grace Śrīmad Bhakti Siddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Prabhupāda in Māyāpura, West Bengal. He moved into the Gauḍīya Maṭha institution immediately after his initiation and took a devout vow of celibacy, even though young of age. Within a very short time, he was regarded as one of the favourite disciples among the entourage of Śrīla Bhakti Siddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Prabhupāda. He resembled Śrīla Prabhupāda in appearance so much that many outside people wrongly thought him to be the son of his Gurudeva.

Śrīla Mādhava Mahārāja took tridaṇḍa-sannyāsa at the age of forty from his godbrother, His Divine Grace Śrīmad Bhakti Gaurava Vaikhānasa Mahārāja (a sannyāsa disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda), at Śrī Ṭoṭā-gopīnātha Temple, Puruṣottama-dhāma, on Gaura-pūrṇimā in 1944. In 1953, he founded Śrī

Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha and established many large preaching centres. He preached extensively in different parts of India, spreading the divine message of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu irrespective of caste, colour or creed. He wandered from village to village, travelling by foot and sometimes by oxcart, to bring the greatest good to every living being by turning them towards Kṛṣṇa.

Usually referred to by his godbrothers as a “gigantic spiritual personality,” Śrīla Mādhava Mahārāja pierced the fortress of impersonalist philosophy in Punjab where he was the first to introduce the Divine Love of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. He also took over the service at the 500-year old temples of Lord Jagannātha at Jasra, Chakdah and Agartala, Tripura. He established the Śrī Caitanya Vāṇī Press in Calcutta.

One of his most prominent deeds was the re-establishing of the appearance site of Śrīla Prabhupāda at Jagannātha Purī. This extraordinary personality, who was kind and magnanimous to all, entered into nitya-līlā on 27 February 1979, on the disappearance day of Śrīla Jagannātha dāsa Bābājī Mahārāja.

Following in his footsteps, his most beloved disciple, Śrīla Bhakti Ballabh Tīrtha Gosvāmī Mahārāja, the president-ācārya of Śrī Caitanya Gauḍīya Maṭha, founder-president of GOKUL (Global Organisation of Kṛṣṇacaitanya’s Universal Love) and president of the World Vaiṣṇava Association, has been engaged in the propagation of the all-embracing doctrine of transcendental Divine Love of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu in India as well as in various countries of the world.